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**FASCISM**

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# F A S C I S M

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**TO  
MY WIFE**



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

FASCISM may be described as the ripening fruit of a world-wide movement of ideas, which for various historical and psychological reasons have first emerged in Italy into something sufficiently definite for the student with an acute sense of history to appraise, and sufficiently universal in appeal to enable him to realize the importance of the part they may be destined to play in the history of the world during the coming generations.

There is, of course, a purely Italian side to fascism, because every movement of ideas receives its particular outward expression in accordance with particular circumstances; and although the term itself "fascism" is no more than an adaptation of the Italian word "fascismo"—similar

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adaptations have entered the vocabulary of every language—we should be ill-advised to restrict its use to denoting only those phenomena which reflect actual Italian conditions. For the word has already acquired a universal import ; and, if its use were restricted to the forms the movement has assumed in Italy, we should be at a loss for a word denoting its wider and more general aspects. On the other hand, its wider meaning includes the narrower.

Italian fascism is still fascism in its wider sense, while the contrary proposition would not be true. Nevertheless, for the simple reason that the movement has as yet assumed a definite expression in Italy and through Italy alone, it is Italy that has become the fountain-head of the movement ; it is to Italy we must turn in order to understand its true significance ; it is by Italy that we must consent to be taught if we hope to profit by any lessons that fascism may contain. So much for the present ; and for the same reason we need

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feel no resentment in acknowledging our debt to Italy for the addition to our language of a new word, which, though a rose by any other name might smell as sweet, is convenient, etymologically apt and already well sanctioned by popular usage.

The derivation of the word "fascism" is certainly both apt and interesting. In ancient Rome the symbol of the State, borne by the lictors before the chief magistrates, was a bundle of rods and an axe. This device has been adopted by the fascists in Italy, has become part-emblem of the Italian State and is likely to be adopted by the adherents of fascism wherever this movement may spread ; for it is a visible sign of the movement's most elementary, most easily grasped, most central political and social principles. Moreover its political and social aspects, though not necessarily the more important, are as yet the more outwardly evident, and of course they in turn reflect the spirit which created them ; and, if the significance of the

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device's Roman origin is obviously great for Italy, it should not be forgotten that the whole of the civilized world, not Italy only, should properly be considered in various degrees Rome's heir. Had it not been indeed for the Roman Empire it is doubtful whether western civilization, which now dominates the world, would have grown beyond the constitution of large States on the oriental despotic model on the one hand, or beyond federations of city States on the Greek model on the other. Some of these States might have produced great civilizations, in so far as civilization may be identified with a high degree of order and culture. But they would in all probability have differed from the civilized States of to-day as profoundly as the conditions of Czarist Russia, for instance, differed from that of Great Britain or the constitution of the Hanseatic League from that of modern Germany—nay, more so, because both Czarist Russia and the Hanseatic League were also strongly influenced by Roman tradition.

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The symbolism is twofold. In the first place the axe is the symbol of State authority, of the importance, nay necessity, of the authority of the State to any well-ordered society, recalling the Roman tradition of authority and of the reign of law and order which was Rome. Secondly, the bundle of rods invokes the idea that in unity we discover strength. Whereas a child would be able to break each rod, taken singly, over his puny knee, a bundle bound together is capable of resisting the force of the strongest man. So the idea of authority is here blended with the idea of co-operation, of the need of co-operation as well as of authority in any well-ordered society. Hence the *fascēs* borne before the Roman magistrates were likewise held in ancient Rome to symbolize the Commonwealth, the society to which each citizen belongs, bound together with the symbol of the State's authority, justification of which lies in its capacity to promote—in the temporal order—the highest collective good, which in turn is conditioned by the

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degree in which individuals prove their ability to develop a spirit of solidarity and to allow their social instincts to override their egoisms.

In other respects *fascio* is a common word in Italy that had been adopted before the advent of fascism by various revolutionary bodies whose organization consisted of small local bands of persons under a central guiding authority. In 1914 Mussolini himself organized such bands under the name of *Fasci d'Azione Rivoluzionaria* with a view to bringing about Italy's participation in the war on the side of the allies. In 1919 these bands were reconstituted by him under the name of *Fasci di Combattimento* to fight Communism and prepare the way for the triumph of his revolutionary programme, which was destined quickly to develop into the "fascist" movement. This side-light, however, on the manner in which the word "fascism" was evolved to denote what the Germans admirably call a *Weltanschauung*—a way of looking out upon the problems of life—

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need not detain us. The purpose of this book is not to furnish a chronicle of events, but to explain the ideas for which fascism stands. To this end it is more important to grasp the simple symbolism underlying the word, which led to the choice of the bundle of rods and the axe as the emblem of the movement; for therein we have a key-notion of its meaning: *authority* and *co-operation*.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is an all too common, though for that matter a very understandable, mistake, however, to regard fascism as a purely political and social phenomenon. Its political and social achievements, especially the former, have had a very wide advertisement, whereas its precise aim and its *Weltanschauung* or what may be called its *temper*, are still relatively unfelt outside Italy. The truth is that the political and social revolution which has occurred in Italy: the new constitution, the fascist syndical and co-operative institutions, the new Italian penal code, the new press laws,



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the great after-work and maternity and infant welfare institutions and so-forth—in fine, the various concrete political and social achievements to date of Mussolini's government—are merely the expression under Italian conditions of the fascist *temper*, which is really the essence of fascism and requires before all else to be explained. This will constitute the primary object of this book. And if accordingly fascism is not merely a political or a social system, neither, it should be noted, is it a complete philosophy of life or a religion. Attempts have been made inside and outside Italy to identify fascism with a particular philosophy or with a particular religion, or to treat it as if it were a complete philosophy of life or a religion by itself. This, in my view, is a mistake. What, on the other hand, can be accomplished and, in course of time, will no doubt be accomplished with greater and greater precision, is the task of rationalizing fascism: its reduction in other words to a set of interdependent

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principles co-ordinated to form a system touching all manner of human activities : an intellectual digest, a syllabus of the movement. Such a system would be required to be justified in the light of philosophy and it may very well turn out to have some strict relationship to a particular religion. No doubt, too, there will be numbers of attempts by different methods to justify it philosophically ; but a reasoned course of revealing the significance of a given movement through the intermediary of a number of carefully explained principles to which the mind may cling as to so many points of support and thereby obtain a steadier and more convincing intuitive vision of the whole idea or ideas which the movement suggests, does not, cannot constitute a philosophy by itself in any full sense of the word. All the same, such a rationalized system as a syllabus presents, still more when philosophy provides an apology for the principles enumerated, satisfies a human need. We all need, in different degrees,

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to think our beliefs, our ways of resolving the problems of life in the form of abstract propositions as well as to perceive them intuitively. But no abstract thinking can ever take the place of comprehensive intuitions ; for such thinking is the result of a cold analytical process which is apt to destroy the unity of the emotion-provoking intuitive vision of any complex event, although, indeed, it may actually help us to obtain a wider intuitive vision of any complex event than we had before, when thereafter we allow ourselves again to approach the subject with the eyes of the artist, who alone can provide us with the necessary synthesis.

Such a synthesis, taking account of innumerable *imponderabilia*, may be compared to the perfection of a circle in contradistinction to a many-sided equilateral figure, laboriously constructed on the basis of known commensurable data (e.g. the process of abstract reasoning upon elementary self-evident truths and pre-suppositions) and representing, as the

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number of sides is increased, a progressive approximation to the circle. The equilateral figure, however, can never coincide with the circle until the number of sides becomes infinite. Short of infinity it will always be possible theoretically to superimpose upon that figure other figures of exactly the same number of sides of the same length in such a way that each side of the first figure intersects one of another, so that, although the figures actually fail to coincide, any one represents an equally close approximation to the circle. This illustrates the manner in which abstract reasoning, though it may fix a number of important truths, leads constantly to paradox: two or more systems equally proximate to the truth, yet apparently contradictory. The intuitive vision (the circle) alone resolves the paradoxes. On the other hand, abstract reasoning (to continue the simile) leads frequently to the construction of similar equilateral figures beyond the radius of the original circle, thus carrying us—by daring specula-

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tion, so to speak—into new fields of knowledge, the full significance of which, however, will not become apparent until intuition steps in again to describe the wider circle.

Nobody, indeed, I feel sure—to pass from the above mathematical simile to a concrete instance—could be brought to grasp the meaning of Christianity by reading a catalogue of its dogmas, however well they may be explained, however well justified in the light of philosophy. A syllabus of Christianity, accompanied by an able apologetic, may very well convince the reader of the essential reasonableness of Christianity, of its compatibility with science, of its pragmatic excellence. Such a syllabus, in these and other days of intellectual controversy, may even be regarded as indispensable for the educated Christian as a means of attack and of defence and as a refuge in moments of clouded vision or of doubt. But to understand Christianity intimately (apart from the question of belief, which depends on

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grace) one surely requires to be touched with the spirit of Christ Himself, *by an intuition of His word in its completeness*, consequent on coming in contact with Him through the story of His life, His recorded parables and His poetic images, through the writings of those who knew and loved Him and of those who later believed and do believe, and through the spirit diffused by His Church in its rites, its arts and its perennial charity.

Similarly a syllabus of fascism would be altogether inadequate as a means of conveying its intimate significance. A few chapters containing an argued statement of the more important fascist principles may be usefully included in a work of this kind, so that the reader may be possessed of a number of useful landmarks, of so many intellectual points of support. But such chapters should properly be preceded by a description of the fascist temper; and in order to be able to do this with any effect the writer must try to raise himself into something of an artist, so that

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he may present a picture to the reader which is a united whole, a synthesis of the thing he must describe : in other words, something of a work of art. Otherwise the reader will be led to lose himself in a labyrinth of detail ; he will fail to see the wood for the trees. For fascism, being a movement of ideas, is characterized by what at first sight appears to be innumerable contradictory interpretations. But the business of the artist is to reach beyond the jostle of opinions, to select what appears to him as chiefly significant of the reality behind the ever-shifting forms, to compose a work expressing his intuitive vision (even though it may be a narrow one) of the whole object, such as the reader through the exercise of his artistic sensibility may be brought to share.

If we cast our imaginations back for a while to, let us say, Florence at the beginning of the fifteenth century, we shall obtain a notion of the *kind* of thing fascism is ; and this exercise will help us to understand why it is that those who

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are caught up by the movement are so filled with a strange excitement. Fifteenth-century Florence was stirred by what we now call the *renaissance*. Here we have an historical example, one with which we are well familiar, of a movement of ideas. The *renaissance* represents no particular philosophy, though it gave birth to many, though it gave a new direction to philosophy in general. Similarly the *renaissance* cannot be identified with any particular religion, though it weakened the authority of the catholic Church and gave birth to Protestantism and led to a widely spread agnosticism and to a cult of pagan ideals. Again it represents no particular political system. On the contrary its first results in this field were to destroy the mediaeval democracies, substituting for them the personal rule of tyrants ; and later, on the ruins of the tyrannies, class government developed, first that of the nobility and then of the bourgeoisie. If the direct consequences of the movement have by now almost worked themselves out, nobody



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would wish to deny their prodigious importance or the permanent value of the experience. And when people first began to be caught up by its spirit, it is difficult to exaggerate the excitement that it caused. A new world, filled with infinite possibilities, was dawning. No one dreamt of the final consequences ; but a new hope had entered into people's lives, creating a new and marvellous vigour, stimulating the spirit to its loftiest flights.

If we turn to the introductory chapter of Miss Edith Sichel's little book on the *renaissance*, belonging to this series, we cannot fail to catch some of the enthusiasm which pervaded those wonderful budding days of our modern era. "It was a movement," she says, "a revival of men's powers, a reawakening of the consciousness of himself and of the universe. . . . Like other movements it had forerunners, but, unlike other movements, it was circumvented by no particular aim, and the fertilizing wave that passed over Italy, Germany, France, England, and, in a

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much fainter degree, over Spain, to leave a fresh world behind it, seems more like a phenomenon of nature than a current of history—rather an atmosphere surrounding men than a distinct course before them. The new birth was the result of a universal impulse, and that impulse was preceded by something like a revelation, a revelation of intellect and of the possibilities in man. . . . Beauty was manifested to man afresh—beauty and joy. . . . Rabelais's giant baby, Prince Gargantua born in the open air, in the midst of a festival, waking to life parched with thirst and calling loudly for drink, must have been a conscious symbol of the child of the *renaissance*. . . .”

Fascism presents a quite analogous phenomenon. There is, moreover, another reason why I have selected the *renaissance* as a parallel event : there is a close historical connection between the two movements. The *renaissance*, in fact, we can now see, was a spiritual movement, which, though it looked back to ancient Rome, reacted

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against the unbroken continuity of the Christianized Roman tradition of the Middle Ages and looked back, beyond Rome, with still more eager eyes to ancient Greece. It provoked the re-birth of Greek speculative thought. Like fascism it matured first in Italy. "Italy," in the words of Miss Sichel, "was the well-spring from which other countries drew life." Out of it grew the modern world as we have come to know it, the modern world which, though still in many respects institutionally Roman, and Roman in many more practical ways still than we are apt to realize, is conspicuously an expression of the triumph of the Greek spirit of speculation, rationalism, individualism and, paradoxically, of uniformity of types in contrast with the Roman spirit of practical common sense, respect for tradition, social solidarity and individual personality. I should, perhaps, add here that I am using the terms "Roman" and "Greek" in a wide sense as typifying two extreme, contrasting, but not necessarily

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contradictory mental attitudes. Bearing this in mind we may say accordingly with perfect truth that since the time of the *renaissance* the Greek spirit has more and more, in spite of many reactionary attempts to check its growth, prevailed over the Roman, until at last it has become a positive danger to society and to morality. It flowered like an overblown rose under the influence of a too hot sun after rain. It ran to excess. God was dethroned and man placed in his stead as Lord of the Universe. God became the creation of man, instead of the Creator; and the Greek spirit unchecked by the synthetic philosophy of the Church which had degenerated since the time of the great St. Thomas into a game of subtle dialectics, precipitated the world into a run of tremendous riot. For the Greek spirit unchecked seems to lead to a dissolution of the body and to moral chaos, just as the Roman spirit unchecked seems to lead to a rigid crystallization of the mind and of institutions, spelling death no less

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assuredly, albeit in another language. So we now find ourselves living in a world of mental chaos and physical strife, in a world where institutions are threatening on all sides to crumble, where the minds of men have no longer any secure points of reference, where scepticism is rampant, where nation is pitted against nation, class against class, individual against individual, in a seeming death struggle, made all the more hideous by the drab uniformity of almost everything that surrounds us, which promises life only to the strongest and the most ruthless.

Now fascism is a reaction against this excess; but it is more than this, as I shall attempt to show. For it would be wrong to describe fascism as merely a "Roman reaction." Such a description would be partly true only, and for this very reason the most dangerous form of falsehood. Nobody in his senses would be so foolish as to deny—the modern fascisticized Italian certainly would not—the exquisite life-giving quality of the Greek spirit, the

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inestimable value of its contribution to civilization in the domain of knowledge, whether intuitive or scientific. The age of Pericles, the height of the Italian *renaissance*, and the modern era of science and invention, stand irrefutable witness. Nobody in his senses, on the other hand, would surely wish to call in question the fundamental importance for civilization of the staid, but more essential, Roman spirit. With respect to an ideal State, the latter might be held to represent the foundation and framework, the former the superstructure and decoration. Man, regarded in the abstract as an isolated individual, draws his life-blood from the Greek spirit; and man, regarded equally in the abstract as a social animal, does likewise from the Roman. But man, as he exists in reality, at once a self-regarding and a social animal, needs to be compounded of both spirits, just as he needs, in order to be in harmony with his essentially dual nature, to conciliate his personal interests with those of the social group to which he belongs.

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To produce a civilization which would be a harmony of the Greek and Roman spirits, between speculation and common sense, between novelty and tradition, between freedom and law, between religion and science, appears to have been the actual hope of the more thoughtful leaders of the *renaissance* itself. There are documents that go to prove that the Church of St. Peter in Rome was designed to symbolize this harmony. Pope Julius II strove to achieve it. But the world was drunk with its newly found freedom. There was no stopping the riot; and only now that we have lived and experienced the consequences of this riot, the bitter aftermath, do we realize how much better it would have been if the erstwhile enthusiasm had been contained. Now the world, if we survey it widely, appears tired and bored. But there are, and have been for some time, many signs of a coming revival. These signs have spoken with innumerable discordant voices. Some are voices of reaction, others are those of

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sick men who have lost touch with reality and have nothing to offer us but impossible dreams. Others again have taken the form of patient diagnoses and partial remedies, little and less little steps in a constructive direction, the beginnings of the foundation of a new high road, clever devices for building the required bridges and parapets, things that in themselves are of small avail but may come to serve later on as an inspiration for minds partaking of a maturer atmosphere. And then, suddenly out of that ever-miraculous soil that is Italy—Italy that for sixteen solid centuries (people are apt to forget this fact !) from 250 B.C. to A.D. 1550 led and dominated the culture of the Western world, except for a comparatively short period during the dark ages when Byzantium became the focus of art and thought—fascism burst into the light of day amid circumstances that confused the issue, flavoured by an Italian aroma that smacked of something alien to foreign national palates, fiercely opposed and traduced by



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the representatives of the old order, misunderstood as much by friends as by foes. Gradually it has fixed the attention of a curious world as a constructive force, as a phenomenon capable for good or for evil of filling the souls of men of diverse nationality, of enflaming a whole nation, of exacting supreme sacrifices. In Italy itself the movement has resulted in a violent social and political revolution; and social and political reformers all the world over are beginning to examine the consequences with a view to seeing whether they may not provide lessons for the resolving of present discontents among other peoples. Few, however, outside Italy have as yet any adequate, wholly conscious notion of the fascist temper of which the fascist reforms are the peculiar Italian expression. Fewer still appear to realize that the movement, unlike that of the *renaissance*, possesses a quite definite and conscious aim. Nevertheless, to the close observer there can be no doubt whatever that such an aim exists and that it is no less than

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the gradual construction of a new world-civilization, which would be the reflection of a synthesis of the Greek and Roman spirits, a conciliation of the ideals of the modern era with those of the old.

The ideals of fascism indeed correspond closely with the hopes of the early *renaissance*; and as Italy occupies the unique position in Europe as the country whose traditions represent the longest and the most varied experience, a veritable melting-pot of all that is both old and new, it would not be surprising if in her newly found vigour and unity she succeeded at last in accomplishing, under the more favourable political circumstances of to-day, what perhaps she only just failed to accomplish for mankind in the fifteenth century.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

VARIOUS attempts have been made since the latter half of the eighteenth century to escape from the excessive individualism which developed as a consequence of the *renaissance*. Although the fundamentally individualistic outlook remained unaffected, the need for curbing individual excesses was realized and philosophy reacted to this need. Some of the philosophers of the age, like the utilitarians and hedonists of the nineteenth century, sought to prove under the influence of the prevailing, and—as it seems to us now—an astonishingly misplaced optimism, that the sum of individual interests in the widest conditions of liberty would in fact in the long run promote the greatest possible

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collective interest. Similarly Rousseau's theory of the social contract was invented as a mythical hypothesis (mythical, because few people ever believed that it corresponded to historical fact) to justify the sinking of the rights of the individual in the abstract conception of the general will of the society to which he belonged. On the other hand, Comte, the founder of positivism—of which Herbert Spencer may be considered later on the leading English exponent, Ardigò the leading Italian—attempted to substitute for the prevailing individualism the “religion of humanity”; while the German idealistic school of philosophy, headed by Hegel, broke definitely from the individualist and utilitarian idea of society, and taught that a people is not an accumulation of separate individuals artificially united by conscious agreement for their mutual advantage, as Locke and the French philosophers had affirmed, but a spiritual unity for which and by which its members exist.

It would be out of place here, however,

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to follow in detail the trend of philosophic thought during the past two centuries since the genuine spirit of the *renaissance* itself dried up. It will be sufficient to register the fact that the attempts to limit the excess of individualism, ushered in by the *renaissance*, have one and all dismally failed. The utilitarian theses have been proved under the stress of actual experience to be at variance with demonstrable fact, and have since been completely abandoned. Rousseau's theory was substituted in practice by the idea of majority rule, as representing what was thought to be the nearest approach to a determination of the general will, since it was found that the general will had no precise articulate means of expressing itself, except possibly by violent popular outbursts—by no means desirable—in moments of extreme crisis and excitement; and majority rule, in turn, turned out to be the very contrary of Rousseau's ideal, since it rendered the State at best but an unstable equilibrium of contend-

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ing individual forces and government the servant of party and class interests. The positivism of Comte and his successors, again, has fallen into discredit, partly because no sufficient reason was forthcoming on the basis of their philosophy to justify in the eyes of the more active and self-confident members of society the altruistic ideals which were advocated. Consequently it tended to give way to the ideas of some of the more extreme members of Nietzsche's school which divided humanity into those animated by servile herd instincts and those others, born aristocrats and leaders, who were a law unto themselves: the cult of the super-man, the very apotheosis of individualism. Lastly, the German idealistic school merely succeeded in sublimating the egoistic impulses of the individual into a racial and national egoism, by which the State became deified, with the result that the excessive individualism of the age was merely carried on to a higher and even more dangerous plane.

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Lately people have begun to realize therefore the impossibility of scotching the prevailing excessive individualism so long as the individual was made the starting-point of philosophy ; for it may be affirmed that nearly all the various systems of philosophy from Descartes onwards may be described as fundamentally individualistic in the sense that nearly all of them either reject, tacitly or positively, or neglect the dual character of the universe based on a transcendent idea. Finally attempts have been made to escape from the antimony of rejecting individualism without rejecting its fundamental presuppositions, by abandoning any attempt to find a system capable of justifying an altruistic life and by falling back on purely empirical action ; and this attitude led to the rise of the philosophy of pragmatism, which taught that a shifting relative truth—relative, that is, to the actual, evident needs of life, individual and collective—constitutes the only kind of truth available to us ; and that

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consequently what is useful may be regarded as true. Parallel with pragmatism there arose modernism, which, in the form condemned by the catholic Church, is in reality a particular form of pragmatism applied to Christian dogmas, which were to be regarded henceforth in the light of splendid myths, useful to life and representing mysterious truths hidden somewhere below the surface of scientific reality. The philosophic bases, however, of these systems were extremely tenuous. They satisfied few people, though many actually act in accordance with them in default of a livelier faith. The dead hand of materialism, in fact, which is one of the most widespread consequences of an unbalanced individualism, has so fastened itself upon the age that countless people find it difficult now to believe in anything at all. They live, so to speak, from hand to mouth, the more ruthless and the more emancipated from custom indulging in an unfeigned egoism, the remainder living on the residue of the moral capital



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—by force of habit so to speak—bequeathed to them by former generations of “believers.” But on every side efforts are being made nevertheless to escape from this slough of despond. On the one hand there is evident a marked revival of catholicism. On the other, spiritualism, Christian Science, even the grossest forms of latter-day superstition are all symptomatic of the same trend away from abject materialism. So too that vague irrational idealism, which is to be met with nowadays on all sides—the morbid refuge from the materialism of the age of the super-sensitive being, who, like the ostrich, burying its head in the sand, imagines thereby he has escaped from the reality which his inability to believe in a universal moral idea causes him to abhor—testifies to the beginnings of a general revival of faith. And this process is being abetted by the progress of modern science, which at length has abandoned its attitude of hostility towards revealed religion. We appear indeed to be on the verge of a

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new age of faith ; and it is fascism which appears to have definitely ushered this new age in.

The basic idea of fascism indeed is the spiritual interpretation of history. Fascism is a definite revolt against materialism, that is, against all forms of interpreting the universe from a purely naturalistic or purely individualistic standpoint. If all fascists are not as yet fervent believers in a divine transcendent Providence, all fascists have at least a will, a thirst to believe in such a One ; all fascists have a reverence for the supernatural and are resolved that the new generations shall be brought up in a religious atmosphere and be protected from the dissolving poisons of materialism in all its forms. This is the paramount reason of fascist intransigence in Italy now, of fascist intolerance, if you will : for fascism is resolved to build up a generation of believers, as the only means of reaching out of the present chaos, cost what it may. Italy may, in this respect, be com-

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pared to a nursery garden of young saplings, which have to be protected from the wind and from frost (from the demoralizing influences of contemporary scepticism and of almost sadistical indulgence in destructive criticism) until such time as they become sufficiently grown to withstand alone the inclemencies of the weather.

To grasp this fact about fascism is to hold the key to the understanding of the whole movement; for it explains how fascism started without any definite theoretical ideas; for the spirit of the anti-materialist revolt was already well abroad in Italy when circumstances forced it to express itself in action before it had reached sufficient maturity to explain itself to itself by systematic thought, to render itself completely coherent—a process which marks invariably a subsequent stage in the development of a spiritual idea. It explains, moreover, its fury against everything representative of the old *régime*, of the old materialistic men-

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ality, whether considered in relation to the former theories in vogue or as its logical expression in political and social institutions ; it explains Mussolini's character as both an idealist and as a man of action with his medium-like gift of interpreting the traditional transcendental spirit of the Italian common people as it gradually emerged out of the experiences of the war and its aftermath, when for the first time Italians as a whole clearly realized a sense of unity and the mass of the people, mostly peasants, among whom the old *renaissance* and *pre-renaissance* traditions had never withered, acquired a consciousness of their spiritual needs. It explains all the differences of opinion among those who would attempt to rationalize the movement ; and at the same time it explains their unanimity in action, their desire to be disciplined and led, and to acquiesce in the loss of certain liberties and even in mistakes of leadership rather than have no leadership, provided the spirit of the movement be maintained.

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*It explains, amid many similarities, the essential difference between fascist nationalism and other forms of nationalism based fundamentally on individualism, whether this be invested with the form of eighteenth-century French rationalism or of nineteenth-century German idealism. It explains the fundamental divergence of outlook and aim, despite a number of parallel forms respecting practical institutions, between fascism and bolshevism, which fascists regard as lying still under the spell of Victorian science (which pitted itself against religion) and under the tyranny of abstract thought.*

Yet fascism is not exactly, on this account, the antithesis of our modern era. It realizes that no heresies would ever have had a chance of capturing the minds of an age, if they did not contain a certain deposit of important truth; that the essence of a heresy—of a wrong view of life—lies in their being one-sided views of truth, taken as fundamental by abstract thinkers or by inexperienced or

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*unbalanced enthusiasts at particular junctures of history, whenever a reaction happened to be called for against the danger of a crystallization of the forms of life. Thus Marx's materialistic interpretation of history, which is the lever of the bolshevist creed, is not rejected by fascism except it be regarded as representing the whole or, at least, a fundamental truth. On the contrary, the materialistic interpretation of history is regarded by fascists as one of many interpretations of history, the result of a particular process of analysis—consequently a one-sided interpretation, useful only if supplemented, or rather complemented by—nay, welded together with—other interpretations. In positing, rather, as fundamental the spiritual interpretation of history, fascists do not accordingly deny the influence on life of material conditions. They would rather place such influences in their proper place and seek to preserve a true proportion in accordance with their transcendental, dualistic outlook, claiming, however, that in the*

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long run it is man's spiritual outlook on life, his spiritual values, that determine within the bounds set by the irreducible facts of reality and of natural existence, the exterior institutional and economic forms of human life.

Thus the attitude of fascism may be described as eminently synthetic, intuitive. It is anxious to preserve everything of value in the thought of our modern era ; and for this reason, though it rejects the typically materialistic bases of modern thought, though it insists on the picking up, as it were, of the old early *renaissance* and pre-*renaissance* traditions and puts a heavy premium on the value of tradition itself, it sets its face resolutely against what may be termed reaction. Its outlook and its aim are positive not negative. In a traditionally catholic country like Italy, it looks to itself as the movement, for instance, prophesied by Gioberti, that will enable the Church, which since the sixteenth century, despite its perennial vitality, may be regarded as having been a

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beleaguered city shut in by widely triumphant antagonistic forces, to assimilate modern culture, relinquish its timid attitude towards modern speculative thought, belie the accusation still often made against it of obscurantism, come out into the open and once more assume the leadership of the world of culture. Similarly, in re-establishing the idea of authority in the State, in aiming at the creation of a governing aristocracy, fascism in no way seeks to go back upon such conquests of the French Revolution as the equality of all citizens before the law, the abolition of the closed caste system, democracy in the sense of a career open to talent or of a constitution broadly based upon the people. And if we traced the attitude of fascism towards the various philosophic movements of our modern era, we would find it ready to acknowledge a debt to them all, to Hegel, to Comte, to Henry James, to Nietzsche, to Bergson—even to Bentham and Marx.

Fascism indeed would reject nothing



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*a priori* of the result of modern “ progress,” claiming only that what vitiated the value of so much that has been accomplished since culture ceased to have its roots in revealed religion was its materialistic and super-individualistic bias ; that to remove this bias, to substitute for it a spiritual, dualistic and transcendental outlook on life will enable the gold to be separated rapidly from the dross and cause every modern conquest of value to fall into its proper place in a new cultural synthesis such as the world has not known since the height of the middle ages.

To this end fascism is determined to educate the new generation into one of believers in a Divine Providence, the heralds of an age of faith, to make of the new generation one of heroes who know no fear because of their faith, who would exalt the spirit of sacrifice, gladly fly in the face of any danger run in a worthy cause and welcome martyrdom with a smile. This is no exaggeration. This is the root of the fascist revolution. God is

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to become once more the central principle of our conscious life, with an objective, didactic moral law, founded on reason, recognized as paramount, not accordingly running counter to the natural quasi-normative laws of organic life, such as the laws of conservation, integration and growth, but transcending them; a law that sums up and harmonizes all our loyalties, dethrones the individual or the State from the position they would usurp from God, yet renders the self-regarding sentiment of self-respect or patriotic feeling capable of receiving a divine extension. The success of fascism accordingly depends on the extent to which the new generation growing up in Italy, or wherever fascism may catch on, will be capable of making this transcendental outlook on life part of its very being. Those who have faith are aware that no death for an ideal is ultimately unfruitful, that even if all we love appears to perish in one supreme heroic sacrifice, we shall be inevitably sowing the seeds for an eventual and

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glorious harvest of our heart's desire ; and it is this spirit which fascism would wish to see leavening the world again, the best spirit of the Crusaders. If this could be done, fascism claims that the rest would come of itself : our present economic and social conditions would be transformed into something less vulgar, into something less servile for the masses, into something less futile for the privileged few. Not that fascism would hold out any Utopian promises. Death, destitution and suffering are the wages of sin and the conditions of our natural existence. But there are eras of social equilibrium and eras of social unrest, eras of beauty and eras of ugliness, eras of courage and character and eras of despair and neurasthenia. What fascism claims to promise, if its spirit be laid hold of in the manner it would wish it to be until it becomes the dominating spirit of the age, is the gradual unfolding of an era of social equilibrium, of beauty and of firmness of character wherein the inevitable trials of

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life may find compensation in spiritual comforts.

We may now accordingly amend our definition of the aim of fascism given towards the end of the introductory chapter as follows: fascism would bring about the gradual construction of a new world-civilization, which would in effect be the reflection of a synthesis of the Greek and Roman spirits, a conciliation of the ideals of the modern era with those of the old; but it would insist that such a civilization can only be built up upon the root and main trunk, so to speak, of the old *pre-renaissance*, transcendental, dualistic view of life, of a spiritual interpretation of the universe, to which basic standpoint modern culture must be assimilated—grafted, so to speak, on the ancient tree just in so far as it may be possible to do so without risking the latter's vitality. So fascism is essentially conservative if we define conservatism, as conservatives themselves would have it, as the aiming at the preservation and

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creation of values worth preserving. It is progressive in the same order of thought, in the sense that it is open to every new idea or attitude compatible with those things which history and experience have sanctioned as, at once, both socially and individually useful. It rejects the new that is not a development of—or, alternatively, that cannot be grafted on to—the old proven values which it deems worthy of preservation. And in this fascism is fundamentally Roman. But it would have men to be scientific husbandmen, anointed by the Greek spirit of restless curiosity, capable of cultivating—provided the principle of organic development be never lost sight of—by fearless application, research and experiment, new and more glorious flowers and fruit than that which nature, left to herself, would be able to produce.

## CHAPTER III

### THE "WELTANSCHAUUNG" OF FASCISM

THE class which in Italy, as in certain other countries, has preserved intact the dualistic and transcendental outlook on life, the moral qualities, the mentality and the traditions of the early and pre-*renaissance* era is the peasant. This fact is due to a number of historical, economic and political causes. During the sixteenth century Italy, though she continued to contribute conspicuously to the cultural life of the world, ceased to be the world's cultural centre. The sceptre passed from her to other nations, especially to France. Her soil gave every appearance of exhaustion and for three centuries Italy became, metaphorically speaking, fallow land. She slept. Only with the nineteenth century was she destined to re-awaken. The dis-

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covery of the Cape route to the East and of America had sapped her commercial vitality ; the new age of coal and iron—materials she scarcely possesses—contributed to making her an economic byewater. The strength of her Roman traditions of universality, civil as well as ecclesiastical, militated against her forming a national unity, such as many other nations had assumed at an early date, so that she became politically weak and the prey to foreign conquests, with all the demoralizing evils attendant thereon. Modern culture, as we have seen, ceased to have its roots in revealed religion or even in a spiritual conception of the universe ; and the catholic Church, which remained powerful in Italy, sought to preserve the traditions of catholic thought by a policy which in many of its practical effects tended to exclude Italy from participating in the modern cultural life of the world. The enemies of the catholic Church will call this a policy of obscurantism, its friends a policy of patience : for faithful to the idea of its

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eternal mission and thinking in terms of centuries rather than in terms of decades, the catholic Church preferred to say, "Wait, the time will come when modern culture will cease to present a danger to catholic faith ; then will come the time—and never too late if the alternative choice is loss of faith—to assimilate its conquests." In any case, whatever interpretations may be placed on them, these and other reasons have brought it about that the peasant class in Italy to-day has maintained its early and pre-renaissance, *Weltanschauung*, grounded on the solid Roman spirit.

The same is only partly true of the other classes. Portions of the nobility, and, to a great extent, the artisan classes have also maintained it. But the middle classes and the urban proletariat, which grew greatly in strength and numbers during the nineteenth century, are in varying degrees more modern than ancient in outlook. Their education since Italy became a united Kingdom has been religious and positivist ; their traditions, since the Napoleonic



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invasions, liberal rather than conservative ; their mentality neo-European.

Broadly speaking, we may say that the peasants and the artisans especially, and in a less degree those other classes who are vocationally employed, who, in other words, pursue a calling by choice rather than by necessity—the landed nobility, the professional classes, the small independent workers and shopkeepers who own their own means of production, the co-operators, etc.—represent the older traditions, the rest the new. But the former represent a considerable majority of the Italian population ; and it was therefore inevitable that as soon as the peasants, who in turn form the largest class within this class, began to possess a definite self-consciousness as a class and to appreciate their position as an active element in the life of united Italy, the older traditions should gain in influence at the expense of the new. This tendency was already apparent before the world war and was a herald of the advent of fascism. The War itself, which gave a

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sense of unity to the country, such as had never been experienced before, accentuated this tendency ; but I prefer to reserve for another chapter some account of the various movements which preceded and eventually led to the development of fascism. The point I wish to emphasize here is that the old traditions and mentality are native to the majority of Italians ; and since fascism would wish to make these old traditions and mentality the basis of its spiritual renovation, since it is determined that the new generation of all classes shall be rooted in them, a description of the essential characteristics of the peasant class in Italy will afford the best possible insight into fascism's *Weltanschauung*, although to this description something more will then have to be added in order to make the picture quite complete.

It is not necessary to insist on the dualistic and transcendental outlook of the Italian peasant. He is eminently a God-fearing man and his whole nature is alien to interpreting the ways of the universe

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from a naturalistic standpoint. Many of his most pronounced characteristics, on which fascism lays great stress in its very comprehensive educational programme, have only, too, to be stated in order to be understood; he is sober, hard-working, thrifty and sparing, well disciplined and exceedingly respectful of authority. Above all he is profoundly pious in the Latin sense of the word which implies a reciprocal devotion and respect between parents and their offspring. The family feeling, which is very strong in Italy, fascism desires to see accentuated in contrast to the dissolving processes at work in so many other countries and among certain classes in Italy herself. The peasant, besides, presents a strongly marked sex differentiation; the men are manly, the women womanly, the former exceedingly robust, full of a healthy animal, combative spirit, loyal, generous and fearless—the latter, mothers in instinct before all else, with an appealing tenderness and power of sympathy, a love of home and of domestic pur-

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suits. If the peasant moreover is attached to the institutions of the religion in which he has been brought up, he is by no means priest-ridden. On the contrary, he has much self-assertive personality and, with all his respect for authority, is as resentful of interference by the priesthood, should the latter incline to overstep what he would consider the proper limits of his purely religious activities, as he is resentful of any attempt to undermine his economic independence. The Italian peasant indeed has a strong proprietary instinct which is wedded to his family feeling. If he is not a small working proprietor, co-operating with his fellows by means of well-organized co-operative societies, he is either a half-share working farmer, with proprietary rights strongly sanctioned by custom, or else a small working tenant farmer whose rents are fixed at a very fair rate through the operation of a system of collective bargaining embracing wide districts. On the other hand, entrenched though he may be behind his property rights, his mentality is

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anti-capitalist, because he produces more for consumption than for profit. Secured, in varying degrees of his house, his corn, his fruit, his vegetables, his milk products, his poultry, his eggs, his wine, his oil and his fuel, etc., he lives largely on what he produces, selling only a comparatively small percentage of his annual production, wherewith to buy his surplus necessities—with the result that he is rendered comparatively independent of price fluctuations. If he is in certain provinces—notably in southern Italy—grossly superstitious, this is due to lack of instruction ; but his superstition does not interfere with his acute sense of reality ; and if he is comparatively ignorant, his common sense and above all his intuitive sense are highly developed. On the whole he exhibits an extraordinarily vital rhythm and balance, in contrast with the modern town-dweller, owing to his contact with nature ; while the rich memories of his racial experiences, extending back for centuries, are preserved and renewed in his incomparable folk-lore.

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It is with these qualities—minus, of course, the superstition and the ignorance—that fascism is determined to leaven the whole country. Some of these qualities are already widely diffused among all classes, notably the proprietary instinct, the family feeling, sobriety, a high degree of common sense and of reality, which goes hand in hand in Italy with a sense of the ideal. Realism and idealism are not opposite qualities but, rather, complementary; and there is perhaps nothing so striking in the Italian character as the manner in which these two things may be seen to balance each other. It constitutes a good example of the kind of mentality and of the kind of approach to the problems of life issuing from it, upon which all good fascists lay particular stress. For their view of life is eminently synthetic, arising from the habit of thinking intuitively rather than in terms of abstract propositions.

To apprehend things synthetically implies the combination into an indivisible

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unity of a number of heterogeneous elements, which, related separately, offer a paradoxical appearance. Life itself, under a process of abstract analysis is bewilderingly paradoxical. Only when viewed synthetically with the intuitive vision of an artist are the paradoxes resolved. There has been a pronounced tendency during recent centuries, a habit of mind engendered by the vulgarization of methods of thought required for scientific purposes, towards applying a process of abstract ratiocination to the problems of life, of practical activity. But life, which expresses itself in action and is at the mercy of innumerable contingent circumstances, invariably eludes the results. Abstract principles are of course extremely useful, nay, necessary, landmarks, fixing certain eternal truths and preserving them from corruption. Often, too, they are the salvation of the mystic who is in danger of becoming misty, or, as far as conduct is concerned, they serve as a rule of thumb for the disequibrated, for those who have been uprooted

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from their natural environment and have lost their bearings. Or again they may enshrine ideals of perfection, which only too frequently, however, have to give way before a practical choice of evils. They would then be the exterior expression of an internal light ; but example and the magic of a concrete experience made communicable to others by a work of art or a poetic image, as, for example, in the language used by the Christ, are able to convey very much more of this light than the most exacting intellectualistic definition. It is impossible to turn life into a system. Life is an art and should be conceived as a work of art, which is the expression of an intuition. Intuition, in point of fact—the apprehension of all we consciously experience as a series of unities moving from the simpler to the more and more complex, to something ever more synthetic—is the very basis as well as the very highest form of knowledge. In this sense truth is no less than beauty ; and art, the exterior expression of all our spiritual experiences, includ-



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ing our very daily lives in action, is the language by which we exchange the results of the continual efforts of each one of us to reach out to the highest apprehensions of truth within our ken.

So each one of us in analytical introspection is a chaos of warring personalities and motives. In order to be able to act with any consistency, to achieve a consistent personality, we must contrive to bring all these warring elements within ourselves into a harmony ; and in order to be able to live at peace with our fellows we must contrive to harmonize ourselves with the social conditions under which we are destined to live. We must contrive, in other words, to make a synthesis of ourselves with regard to both our interior and exterior lives. We must make of ourselves artists, whose selves are our own masterpieces ; and in order to be able to do this we must develop our æsthetic sensibilities, learn to relegate logical and analytical processes to their proper sphere as means and not as ends, means to the achievement of ever vaster

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intuitive perceptions, of ever more complex, but no less unitary, synthetic visions of life. The significance of life will then emerge as an active principle of continual creation and re-creation in the ceaseless pursuit of ever higher harmonies, wherein thought and action are perfectly reconciled, implying the existence of a final and infinite harmony in the act of an infinite Creator and, likewise, a faith in the existence of a Creator as the needed cement whereby we may integrate our various disparate experiences in the art of building up ourselves into as completely balanced men and women as possible.

This intuitive outlook, typical of the Italian peasant, represents indeed the *central active principle of the fascist Weltanschauung, in contrast to the rationalistic and analytical temper of the centuries that have just flown by.* Fascism would thus teach us principally what might be called the *art of integral living*, to use an expression of Aldous Huxley's, the art of making ourselves as completely balanced men and

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women as in the power of each one of us to make, to which relative balance only a highly developed æsthetic sensibility, in the widest sense of the term, can lead us. It would break down the modern tendency towards over-specialization and would free us from the tyranny of abstract thought, which places us out of touch in our practical lives with concrete reality and renders our ideas lop-sided. It would by no means on that account ask us to despise reason, but it would remind us of what the rationalist is apt to forget, namely, that reason goes far beyond mere logic.

This ideal of the completely balanced man and woman in the fascist idea may be said to include the perfectly normal man and woman, who is well adjusted to his or her environment. This, however, would not exclude the exceptional in the sense of the exceptionally endowed, or the original in the sense of a creative artist. It would exclude only the abnormal in the sense of the mentally deformed, stunted and dis-equilibrated, the unilateral, the over-speci-

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alized, the logic-ridden intellectual—those constitutionally unable to sympathize with the interests and vocations of others different from their own, those lacking in common sense and measure, incapable of spontaneous action, afraid of reality. The Italian peasant, however much he may fall short of its perfection, is nevertheless representative of this fascist ideal of the normal, balanced personality such as I have attempted to describe. Mussolini, himself of peasant origin, is thoroughly representative. He is a peasant aristocrat. He is unerringly interpreting the peasant mind in the policy which he is pursuing; and in order that the new civilization should be rooted in the *Weltanschauung* of his class, formed by a life lived in contact with the soil and the sea, he is determined to make it fundamentally a rural civilization. In the following chapters I shall have occasion to allude to some of the practical measures adopted to this end. Here, before all else, I am anxious to complete the picture of the fascist *Weltanschauung*; for if the repre-

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sentative religious and intuitive outlook of the Italian peasant is the yeast with which fascism looks to leaven the whole of society, if his solid virtues are the basic materials out of which fascism seeks to form the character of the new generations, there are a number of elements to be added to round off the fascist ideal of the completely balanced man and woman. Although Mussolini is what the Italians call *strapaesano* (an untranslatable word denoting an almost extravagant appreciation of everything that is characteristic of rural life), although the *strapaesano* literary and journalistic movement in Italy, with its delightful sense of humour and its robust sanity, is the most typical and authentic manifestation of fascist thought and feeling, it would be an exaggeration to assert that urban life is unable to contribute anything to the ideal that fascism sets before itself.

The city is, of course, an indispensable element in any highly civilized nation's life. It is only when the cities begin to

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monopolize a country's life, when they become parasitic, when a vast proportion of the population on that account begins to lose touch with nature and with the natural region on which its social welfare depends, that they present an intolerable danger. The immense enveloping towns characteristic of our present type of civilization spell inevitably a biological decadence, which even the highest achievements of science and art and economic organization are powerless to avert. The city's natural rôle is the formation in each natural region of so many points of cultural and industrial concentration, each city being thoroughly representative of its region for the purpose of potentializing its region's natural activities. The region and the city must, of course, be mutually dependent on one another ; but the city should be considered the ornament and servant of the region rather than the region the playground of the city.

The city nevertheless breeds easily certain admirable qualities which the country-

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side can only attain with difficulty: a refinement of manners, a more responsible civic sense, a physical and intellectual spirit of adventure, and, what at first sight appears paradoxical, the truly sporting spirit; for the sporting spirit is born out of a desire for physical recreation, which is a need felt only by a small proportion of dwellers in the country, the more leisured classes. So a refinement of manners, a more responsible civic sense, which goes beyond patriotic feeling, a physical and intellectual spirit of adventure and daring, a truly sporting instinct, the spirit of fair play—all those self-reliant, responsible, frank and chivalrous qualities which are characteristic of the public-school class in Great Britain and America, the spirit of *camaraderie* between members of both the same and opposite sexes, are required in accordance with the fascist idea to supplement the graver qualities of the peasant classes.

In the middle ages and during the early *renaissance* the city lived by its region

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and was, as it should be, the potentialized microcosm of its region. It consequently threw up many notable examples of completely balanced men and women, which can serve as models of the fascist ideal of character and attainment. If accordingly I were asked to choose an historical figure which responds most nearly to the fascist ideal of manhood, I might perhaps pick out Julius II, the great warrior-pope, a man remarkably humane, considering the times, which were distinguished by much callousness and ruthlessness, brave, robust and virile, great sportsman and great patriot, normal minded, practical, endowed with a sharp sense of the reality of every situation in which he was placed—yet combining with all these soldierly virtues a deep sense of religion, an exquisite artistic sensibility and a culture and subtlety of mind only rivalled by a few of his contemporaries. This intellectual and cultivated warrior (prescinding from the question whether his character was altogether suitable for the office he adorned) may be said to be a type



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of the Knight chivalrous of fascism : as the fascist refrain goes, “ *Libro e moschetto, fascista perfetto* ” (“ Book and musket, perfect fascist ”)—that is, Understanding and Service, a type wherein a sound practical realistic sense is mated to a religious, artistic and speculative intelligence.

Similarly, if I were to choose a representative lady, I do not think I could do better than to allow my choice to fall upon Elizabeth of Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino, who besides being reputed to have been both beautiful and wise, was all that could be desired as a wife and a mother, an incomparable hostess, intelligent and accomplished, clever with her hands and an excellent housekeeper, courageous in adversity, deeply religious and a daring horse-woman to boot.

As a patron saint of fascism, St. Francis, whose capacity for universal passionate loving could sanctify all he touched and transform ordinary ugliness into beauty, has been mentioned by several Italian writers. Mussolini himself has referred to

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him as the most representative of all the Italian saints. But, as the patron saint of fascism, he would not have to be the sentimentalized Francis of popular imagination, the mild-mannered doting upon animals and children, the degradingly humble, the sickeningly exasperated ascetic. It would have to be the real Francis, the very much completely balanced man : ascetic, yes, in accordance with the ideas of his age, because he insisted that his body should be his servant (nowadays he might have gone in for physical culture !); humble, yes, as one who is conscious of the infinitude of his Father's love, of His all-embracing sovereignty and of the littleness of man, but possessed of that dignity that comes of breeding and tradition, and of that assurance that comes of a consciousness of representing a worthy cause, who set his mind fearlessly and obstinately against the Pope's and carried the victory ; gentle, too, but of that gentleness that is the complement of strength and the fruit of a great love : the real Francis, supreme idealist

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and realist in one, one in thought and action, artist, devotee and practical organizer.

More typical, however, than Francis, perhaps, as an ideal figure embodying the virtues on which fascism puts particular store, is, in my opinion, St. Ignatius of Loyola. There was perhaps never a man who combined so well in one person learning and action ; he was both philosopher and soldier, as well as mystic. He knew the value of discipline and authority. He founded the "little army of Jesus" and made it the spear-head of the Counter Reformation. It would, indeed, not be difficult to draw a parallel between him and Mussolini, different as may be the spheres of life in which the two are placed ; and this something of similarity between the two characters and between the values they represent, inclines me to choose Ignatius rather than Francis as the typical saint of fascism.

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The above should give the reader an idea

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of the values which fascism exalts, the kind of mentality which it desires to see triumph. To sum up : fascism sets before itself a definite standard of character. It insists accordingly that questions of right and wrong are matters of objective and discernible truth and that they are fundamentally concerned with questions of character ; that the salvation of a race depends mainly upon the proper formation of character and that the formation of character, as well as an ultimate, practical solution of social and economic problems, depends in turn on our ability in the first place to renounce materialism in all its forms ; in the second place to develop our æsthetic sensibility—not to the detriment of logic, but for its fulfilment ; in the third place to correct the prevailing excess of the Greek individualistic spirit by the development of an active religious principle in our lives and of a truly Roman sense of social solidarity, made manifest and easier by a corporate organization of society, strengthened by patriotism and sanctioned by

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authority ; and fourthly by ruralizing our civilization. All this, fascism claims, would make possible a social unification of the Western world, the emergence of a new and vital synthetic civilization compounded of the two great formative traditions of Europe, the Greek and the Roman ; and it seeks to bring this result about by spreading the fire of its faith by the force of example and enthusiasm, and by bending to its purpose all the powers of authority which it can succeed in infusing with its spirit.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ETHICAL STATE

#### I. *The Authoritative and Unitary State*

THE concluding sentence of the last chapter leads us to the consideration of what fascists call the "ethical State." There are various interpretations of this idea by fascists of different schools of philosophy. The ultra-nationalist school, the ultra-catholic school and the neo-idealist school are continually at each other's throats on the subject. But although the polemics between these schools occupy a lot of print, all three offer extreme solutions which, in spite of the fact that the ultra-nationalist and the neo-idealist schools in particular have received and still receive considerable official support—the first on account of the need felt of emphasizing a conscious sense of nation-

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ality among Italians, such as was evidently lacking before the War, the second on account of its admirable pedagogic methods—are only partly representative of fascist opinion. Moreover the whole trend of fascist opinion is away from the extreme solutions of these three schools. What follows therefore will be an explanation of the idea as it is held by the main and what appears to me the most vital current of fascist opinion, an explanation which may be said to have the merit also of representing a common denominator of all the various currents of opinion, that on which the vast majority of fascists take their stand. It is an explanation, moreover, which may be said to be acceptable to the consciences of the vast majority of Italians who have no intention whatever of compromising their catholic faith; and it is one which Christians of all denominations—and for that matter all religiously minded persons—can endorse.

The fascist idea of the ethical State rests on three basic principles. First, that man,

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besides being an individual, is by nature also a social animal, by which is implied the notion of necessary corporative existence, within which under some form of disciplinary authority (inseparable from the idea of any form of society) individuals must needs live. Secondly, that human actions are subject to the moral law, itself based upon the eternal law of God, by whose virtue all things exist, obedience to whose behests is the condition of all harmony. In other words, right and wrong involve questions incapable of solution in accordance with the various inclinations—often blind and pernicious—of individuals, but are matters of objective and discernible truth. Thirdly, each differentiated human group—of which the nation-State, in the temporal order, is the most perfect example—is a natural phenomenon which possesses an organic life embracing a series of generations of individuals composing it, possessed of a community sense and subject to natural sociological laws of conservation, integration and growth — natural laws



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which may be given a normative character, since they are laws of life (transcended by, but not opposed to the moral law). The third principle, indeed, in a sense summarizes the first two.

Few people will be found nowadays to dispute the proposition that societies manifest an organic character ; and sociology is the science which attempts to lay bare the natural laws which govern society conceived of in the above sense as a manifestation of organic life. It attempts to establish uniformities in the ordinary scientific sense, that is, generalities having the character of successive approximations to the truth, bearing on the subject-matter. It traces cause and effect in the life of societies, informs us of the conditions favourable to the continued vitality, integration and growth of societies, of the consequences that may be expected to ensue from certain conditions, circumstances, pursuits, beliefs, policies, etc. It does not attempt to dictate to us the direction which we ought to go : but the knowledge it pro-

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vides increases the hold of statesmen and social reformers over nature and so enables them to achieve more easily and with less risk of failure whatever objects they may set themselves. Or they enable us to diagnose a situation and predict certain results. It sets limits, too, to Utopian dreams, holds the statesman and social reformer within the bounds of reality and nurtures their practical faculties.

Although sociology, however, contains no categorical imperative, refrains from giving us any information on the subject of the ends which we ought to pursue, the science would lose all practical value and consequently a great deal of its interest if a great many people were not vitally concerned with the health and vigour of the societies to which they belong and with the improvement of social, economic and political conditions generally—were not anxious, in other words, to acquaint themselves with the laws discoverable by sociology for the precise purpose of making use of the knowledge thus gained to

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promote their community's well-being in a manner compatible, if possible, with the well-being of other communities. But what if opinions differ as to what constitutes a community's well-being? Rational progress is only possible when it is known to what end it is desired to progress. The following dilemma appears therefore unavoidable: either we must come to some definite conclusion on the meaning of good or we must leave things to work themselves out by the interplay of the blind forces of nature or of warring interests.

It might be presumed, just as I might claim for myself to be better qualified to know what constitutes my own good than anybody else, that the general will of a community, in so far as it may be ascertained, might be safely left to decide the question. If questions of right and wrong are not matters of objective and discernible truth or (even supposing it were granted that they might be so theoretically) if they are considered in practice too complicated or vague to allow of any truly valid uni-

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versal moral judgments, the course dictated by the general will would indeed represent the nearest practical approximation possible to rational progress.

The whole of modern liberal and democratic practice appears in fact to be based upon this assumption. The general tendency to regard questions of right and wrong as matters, if not absolutely, at least practically subjective, in accordance with the rampant individualism of the age, points straight to this assumption as the one way of escape from the above dilemma. For thus the individual's narrow task of "self-realization" according to his private set of values might be submerged, except for those things which only concerned him personally, in the "self-realization" of his community; and this in turn might be submerged in the "self-realization" of humanity at large. So as interests tended to become universalized, a right morality—even though we might not be able exactly to define it—would be approached.

This line of argument contains many

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elements of truth. The most rigid moralist will admit, even though he may insist that questions of right and wrong are indeed matters of objective and discernible truth, that interests tend to be moralized in proportion as they become universalized, that in so far as an individual, whether it be a single person or a community, is capable of allowing his personal motives to be transcended by those of a concrete order of which he forms but a part, he lifts himself on to a higher moral plane. For this very reason it will be conceded by most thinkers that the moral law and the laws of life, regarded as normative in the sense above indicated, are not contradictory, and that the former may be regarded as the latter transcended to embrace a universal view.

So far so good. And we may neglect to examine the question as to whether sovereignty—ultimate human authority—must necessarily reflect the general will, because the question has now been placed beyond dispute by the most authoritative latter-day sociologists. It does *not* necessarily reflect

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nor arise out of the general will, except in a very special sense which will be explained later. The fact is there are innumerable kinds of sovereignty; and sovereignty arises in innumerable ways. It is the task of the historian, in diagnosing a given political situation, to pronounce judgment as to where exactly for a given community at a given moment sovereignty actually resides. And it is similarly the task of the historian to inform us how, case by case, a given sovereignty has arisen. It may arise, for instance, through natural status, as in the case of the father of a family unit, and thence develop into a patriarchal system. Or—to give another example (the examples could be multiplied indefinitely)—it may arise through conflict, resulting in some system of balanced powers through compromise or in the triumph of one party over another, the party (be it understood) being either an individual or a caste or a class or a group holding certain ideals or a community. Or, again, it may arise through the working of a system of consti-

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tutional laws or of customs having the force of law, originating in some previous more arbitrary system. The theory that sovereignty primarily originated by social contract between a number of lone, isolated individuals is as dead as mutton ; though it may be presumed that when the State first arose, there existed a large measure of implicit consent among its members in favour of the original authority—the truth being that authority normally rests at once upon a measure of consent and a measure of force. For that matter, too, there may be some historical, isolated cases, when a super-authority has been created by deliberate arrangement between a number of independent sovereigns, forming thereby a new composite type of sovereignty. The League of Nations might, for example, be regarded as an attempt to create a super-national authority by some such arrangement. Sovereignty, accordingly, need not necessarily be a manifestation of the general will, in the usual meaning of the term, even though it may be a fact

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that a sovereign who disregards any strong manifestation of the general will (especially should such manifestation be symptomatic of a grave pathological situation with respect to the body politic) will be risking the digging of his own grave—just as the sovereign mind of a human being may bow, without abdicating its sovereignty, before the imperative need of the body undergoing an operation, however much such a decision may go against the grain, rather than risk death.

The important point to note in this connection is that sovereignty in some form is a condition of all societies. There is no society without its governing authority. If a given governing authority—the sovereign power *de jure*, for instance, of a given community—fails to assert itself, it means that it is already sharing the sovereign power with one (or more) other self-constituted *de facto* authority. In fact no *de jure* authority is really absolute. There is always in every State some kind of balance of powers, sharing between them—on occa-



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sion, at any rate—the real supreme authority. As I have already stated, authority normally rests at once on a measure of consent and on a measure of force. Fundamentally it is a question of vitality. If a given sovereign power fails to adapt itself to the requirements of changing social, political or economic conditions—if it does not, in other words, demonstrate its vitality by its adaptability—or, alternatively, if it fails to dominate its environment, its authority will in the long run inevitably pass, either by violence or gradual decay, elsewhere. If violence is to be avoided, it is well to devise a relatively flexible constitution; but, on the other hand, if a constitution be too flexible, it will mean that the centre of gravity of the sovereign power will be constantly shifting—and this in turn will mean that the ship of State will be allowed for all practical purposes to drift. Hence the devising of a constitution is a matter of very great practical importance—and of course the requirements of one community

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may differ very widely from those of another. But, although there may be a number of general practical principles which experience may strongly recommend for the framing of all constitutions, there is no absolute rule arising out of the inherent nature of sovereignty—e.g. that sovereignty is legitimately the expression of the general will, from which alone it is derived, and that any interference with such expression is consequently illegitimate.

The fact, however, that sovereignty need not necessarily reside in or be derived from the general will, does not affect the plea of those who argue that it ought to. The assumption that we have been examining maintains that it ought to. Let us see then to what extent it can. What is the general will ?

Now my task here is to expound fascism ; and so I shall give to these questions, for the benefit of the reader, the fascist answers. It will be for him to judge whether they are valid. I shall then proceed to

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point out the consequences of accepting the fascist thesis.

The general will, in the usual meaning of the term, regarded as a phenomenal fact without reference to any basic theory, can be no more and no less than the life instinct of the herd, a reflection of its vital solidarity. But this is not apparently a rational force at all. It operates more or less strongly in proportion to the degree of a society's cohesion and sense of unity ; and it also operates especially strongly in proportion to the imminence and evidence of danger ; but normally it is a relatively dormant force, negative rather than positive, so that in the absence of any acute crisis it is very feebly manifested, if at all. In the presence of any acute crises, on the other hand, it tends to emerge, clamouring for a remedy, pointing very often to a particular remedy with an almost uncanny wisdom. In such cases its demands are often irresistible. Often, too, they are respectable ; but because it is irrational, relatively blind and ignorant, it is never-

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theless subject to error, to panic, to undue exaltation, to indulgence in ferocious violence ; and sometimes it points the way, under the stimulus of fear or exasperation, to what would prove in effect to be irretrievable disaster. The fact that it is a thing to be reckoned with is a proof of the organic character of society, being the instinct for the preservation of life such as all live organisms possess ; but it is an animal instinct, which, in so far as it can be supplanted by reason, should be largely discounted. And since it is strong in proportion to a society's cohesion, it must be reckoned as pre-eminently selfish. Thus the lack of cohesion in that society which we call humanity, causes it to be practically inoperative as a general human force. Similarly it is relatively inoperative as a force representing the various branches of the human race, although probably it would emerge, say, as a European force in the face of a truly imminent and evident "yellow peril." It becomes only relatively strong as representing nations and

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still more national States—and it places therefore a premium on particularist national interests. It is naturally predatory. And, again, since it is relatively dormant in the absence of any acute crisis, it is very little use as a life preserver against slow insidious internal dangers, such as the harmful biological effects of over-urbanization or the demoralizing social conditions of a system producing a grossly uneven distribution of wealth. Moreover, it can only manifest itself in the form of a general psychological excitement, leading to spontaneous action in the form of monster agitations, which may have ugly and violent issues unless firmly met.

That, in a nutshell, is what fascism designates as the only meaning that can be properly attributed to the term “general will,” except the very special meaning which it might be proposed to give it and is equivalent to something quite different from any of its ordinary meanings, as we shall subsequently point out. Granted that much, for the moment it is obviously

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not the same thing as organized public opinion, rationally voiced ; because, apart from the fact that organized public opinion is seldom in practice anything more than the organized opinion of a sectional interest, the *sum of the individual wills of the members of a community is never the same thing, even if unanimous, as the general will*, for the same reason that the sum of individual interests of the members of a community does not amount to the general interest.

Now, at first sight, the assertion that the sum of the individual wills of a community is never the same thing as the general will, *even if unanimous*, appears flatly contrary to the truth ; but on closer examination it can be shown that it is not so. The fact that it does indeed seem, at first sight, to be contrary to the truth affords the explanation why it has been so easily assumed that it is possible to found the government of a community on the general will. It appeared to present an easy arithmetical problem—a matter for

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counting heads. That the sum of individual wills amounted to the same thing as the general will constituted the principle according to which government by majority came to be considered the ideal form of government; for, although it was recognized that the will of a majority was not quite the same thing as the general will, it was taken for granted that it was an approximation to it in strict proportion to the degree in which the majority approached unanimity; and since unanimity was in practice difficult to obtain, majority rule was sanctioned as a practical proximate solution, which nobody possessed of common sense would wish to cavil at. For all intents and purposes it appears to correspond with the ideal in view. Various efforts have been made to produce arithmetical solutions which claim to render the results by counting heads more and more proximate to the general will, such as proportional representation, the referendum and initiative; and many of these more ingenious systems have been

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tried with relative success. But one and all are based on the fallacious assumption that the sum of individual wills represents the general will. Whether in given circumstances any of these systems produce commendable governments or the reverse is beside the point. The point is, according to the widely accepted idea under examination, that in the absence of any clearly objective criterion by which the community's good may be defined and aimed at, the general will, which can at least have no other desire than to promote the general interest, remains the only practical guide to progress ; and that some form of majority rule, in the face of the practical impossibility of obtaining unanimous decisions, remains the only near approach to rule by the general will.

In the days of *laissez faire* (when the ideas of the Manchester School were widely accepted) it was assumed by economists that the sum of individual interests pursued in conditions of the maximum economic liberty would amount to the general



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interest. But very soon in view of the many intolerable consequences of putting this theory into practice, economists began to discover that there existed a fallacy somewhere. Similarly as the suffrage has been extended, with a view to bringing government nearer to the general will, political scientists as well as the practical man of common sense began to observe that the results appeared to belie the purpose more and more. At first it was supposed that the contradictory results were merely due to lack of knowledge. Instruct the people better and the contradictory results will disappear—that became the cry. Gradually, however, people began to wake to the fact that there was some equivocation somewhere. Education in the sense of a wider knowledge of public affairs and of the various issues and repercussions involved in legislation was seen to be a double-edged sword: it placed the predominantly selfish in a better position to pursue their selfish aims than before, however much it placed the prepotentially

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unselfish in a better position to pursue unselfish aims. And unfortunately the predominantly selfish remained the overwhelming majority. Only such education as was capable of developing the unselfish, disinterested side of human nature at the expense of the selfish, interested side, it began to be seen, would be of any avail. The success of the whole system was therefore seen to depend not merely on greater knowledge but on at least greater patriotism and—certainly as far as international relations were concerned—on some still higher motive. In fact a deeper religious sense was seen to be required, something capable of transcending patriotism—in other words, a higher moral purpose. Indeed the general will was seen to mean nothing at all except in the sense explained above (e.g. the herd instinct) *unless it were taken to mean no more nor less than a high standard of morality.* A vote cast was always a selfish vote except in so far as the voter possessed a sufficiently high moral sense to compel him to vote disinterestedly.

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Only the truly disinterested votes can thus be said to point to the *general will*, because *only the disinterested votes represent the social side of human nature*.

This is the meaning, alluded to above, which fascism might be prepared to give to the term "general will" (and in this sense to bow down before the general will), if it did not consider that it was to better purpose to substitute for the term "general will" the term "moral law"; for by doing so all equivocation is removed. The *vox Dei* is not thereby confused with the *vox populi*.

But to pursue our argument: The individualist never represents more than the individualist: person, class or nation. Interested voting, even if the results all go one way, simply means that the personal interests of an aggregate of individuals happen to lie in that direction. The collective interests might nevertheless lie in the opposite direction. You cannot argue from the particular to the general. It might, for example, very easily be true that

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in a given community the interests of each married couple, taken singly, would be to limit their family to two or three children. But statistics prove that as long as that happened the race would decline in numbers until it disappeared altogether. Or, again, if the aggregate of individuals composing a community are for one reason or another personally interested in a law permitting public gambling, and if they vote in favour of such a law because it is their personal interest to do so, the law, good or bad, will not have been passed because it was the general will, representing the collective interest, that it should pass, but because it was the will of a heterogeneous number of individuals each aiming at his purely personal advantage and relatively neglectful of the fact that the span of his life and of those he loves covers only a tiny portion of the life of his community, made up of an indefinite series of generations. The general will—the collective will—to conclude, is a question of motive and not a question of counting votes irrespective

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of motives ; and since it is impossible to control a voter's motives, it is impossible to estimate to what extent the results of an election or of a referendum reflect the general will ; or to give any value to the results with respect to the general interest. It is an operation entirely beside the point at issue ; and if that be so, away goes the whole case for majority government, unless it can be justified on entirely different grounds, namely, as a mere piece of machinery calculated to result in a more efficient, a wiser and more moral government than any alternative piece of machinery that may be suggested.

This, however, brings us back to our starting-point : the question of morality mainly—the question of wisdom and efficiency in a second degree—becomes the whole and vital question. If the general will cannot be gauged by votes, as long as human nature remains as it is with its selfish interests (individual, class, national, etc.) necessarily predominant ; if right and wrong are not matters of objective

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and discernible truth, the destiny of societies must be left in the keeping of the blind forces of nature and of warring interests and opinions. There can be no rational progress.

The whole machinery, in fact, of modern democratic governments based on an individualistically organized system of elections, despite the admirable intentions of its inventors, turns out to be little more than an admirably adapted piece of machinery by which conflicting interests and opinions may fight each other without bloodshed. The State, necessarily agnostic in the presence of this boxing match between its members, has no other task but to hold the ring and to see fair play—the limit to its agnosticism determining the rules being the degree of unanimity with regard to questions of right and wrong which happens to prevail over a given period and is voiced by organized public opinion and reflected in the laws of the land, a standard tending necessarily to shift from generation to generation, in that

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in such circumstances it tends to become dependent in the long run entirely on the fashion set by the actions and reactions of the successively prevailing sections, opinions and interests.

Government, accordingly, ceases to be identified with the State, which becomes merely a kind of passive common denominator of opinion, but becomes an element actively concerned with the promotion of particularist—in modern conditions, mainly class—interests. Thus only two checks on tyranny exist: the passive but fluctuating common denominator of opinion represented in the State and the balance of power between the various contending egoisms. Where minorities remain strong a certain tolerable equilibrium may result which prevents the grosser forms of tyranny. But class warfare becomes the order of the day and class domination the necessary consequence of any breach in the balance of power, resulting in a tyranny precariously mitigated only by such consensus of active opinion as

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there happens to be as the result of national traditions and common elements of education and religion among the members of the community. An exactly similar situation is created in the international field. It becomes impossible to tell where the world may drift. Standing above the *mêlée* one would have nothing left to hope for than that the doctrine of inevitable progress were true, although it would be impossible to define what progress is. The religion of inevitable progress indeed, in favour of which—to say the best for it—there is only very slender scientific evidence, becomes under the above dispensation the very last refuge of the optimist, where all else is despair and where everything appears a chaos. The more we look at it in fact, the more untenable appears the whole assumption that we have been examining. Yet unless we can acknowledge that right and wrong involve moral values of universal validity, there is no escape from it.

Fascism takes the bull by the horns and



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plumps straight for this solution as the only possible one. It is part and parcel of its general rejection of materialism and of its particular aim to check the excessive individualism of the post-*renaissance* period. Moreover the error, which it rejects, it claims is due to the confusion of mind resulting from the tyranny which the habit of abstract thought has extended over the minds of men during recent generations. It is, in fine, a solution entirely in accordance with the fascist *Weltanschauung*.

Now fascism would not deny that there are many forces, material forces, influencing the destinies of societies over which we have no control. But it would insist that to a large extent we *can* control our destiny, especially nowadays that the progress of scientific knowledge has rendered man relatively more master of the forces of nature. And this view is supported by sociology. Nor would fascism deny that a struggle of interests between individuals, classes and nations is a common fact ; but

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it insists that there exists a universal moral law which, even though in practice it may often be overridden by the egoism of individuals, classes and nations, remains a constant and universal check on egoism—and therefore on tyranny at home and oppression abroad—through the influence of conscience—considered as the still small voice of God and not as the mere prompting of a herd instinct. It is claimed, however, that, although this voice of conscience is a constant force operating in favour of good government, it may become relatively atrophied by a habitual disregard of it or by acquiescence in the notion that it has nothing in it of the divine, or by rationalistic habits of thought resulting in the weakening of our practical intuitive judgments, or by a system of government which is designed to allow those opinions and interests to prevail which happen to be the stronger irrespective of the objective moral value represented by them.

Whereas, therefore, a belief in the subjective nature of right and wrong on the

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one hand, and, on the other, a belief in the view that the State cannot be other than the fluctuating resultant of various interests and opinions (since there are no means of determining the general will with respect to general interests and of therefore devising a system tending automatically to more disinterested and so to actually higher moral decisions), place our collective life at the mercy of blind force against which there can be no remedy and preclude all rational progress, a belief in the objective nature of right and wrong provides at least a possible remedy ; for, however difficult it may be to prevent in practice the influence and triumph of individual egoisms, we are thereby at least driven to consider the whole question of State action and of the State's constitution from the standpoint of what may be judged likely to promote the best individual and collective life. We shall be driven to devise measures freely, without allowing ourselves to be hypnotized *a priori* by the principle of popular sovereignty, whereby government

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may tend to become the prerogative of a class of *optimi*, of those persons whose egoisms are habitually overridden by their social sense, by a well-informed patriotism, by a high moral purpose, capable of transcending their patriotism, and of those persons possessing other important qualifications for government, namely, knowledge and experience of sociological and economic laws, a sense of reality and of tradition, etc. Fascism, in other words, accepts the principle of government by an aristocracy in the sense of an *élite* and makes this its aim, in contrast to the liberal principle of popular sovereignty. Similarly it rejects the idea of State agnosticism and of government by party ; and insists that the whole State be identified with the active principle of government, which must consequently be an authoritative government deriving its authority from the moral law. To leave things to work themselves out by the interplay of good, bad or indifferent forces, whatever the result may be, represents to the fascist a positively

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shocking doctrine—a grossly immoral attitude.

In rejecting, however, the idea of popular sovereignty, fascism would not on that account necessarily exclude the people from participating in the sovereign power. The right to participate in the sovereign power should depend, so it insists, on the degree in which individuals fit themselves to participate in it by developing their moral and social sense of responsibility and other qualities. Liberty is not merely the absence of checks, still less an absolute right to live one's own life without unduly interfering with the similar right of one's neighbour, but the positive result of a conquest of self and evil. Liberty, in the absolute sense is, in the words of St. Paul, nothing more nor less than freedom from the bondage of sin. It is invariably the complement of law, whether it be moral law or civil law, the reverse side of the same medal. Hence concrete liberties may be conceded by the State, generally speaking, in proportion to the

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efficacy of the moral law reigning in the hearts of the people and in proportion to their knowledge of circumstances—particularly speaking, in relation to varying external conditions. As Mussolini has said : There is a liberty for times of war, another for times of peace ; a liberty for times of revolution, another for normal times ; a liberty for times of prosperity, another for times of stringency.

The people accordingly may participate in the sovereignty, may conquer the right to do so in proportion only as they fit themselves to do so. But there will always be some persons better fitted to govern than others and to these should be reserved proportionately the posts of greater responsibility and power. Aristocracy, with one wide alley open for new elements to stream continually upwards and another by which unworthy elements may be expelled, becomes thus the necessary ideal of government, organized in the form of a hierarchy of power and responsibility in accordance with merit, culminating in one supreme

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authority, with investiture from above downwards (not upwards from below ; for the latter would mean selection by the less responsible elements).

This does not imply dictatorship in the sense of the personal rule of one man ; on the contrary, though it implies a strict and firm system of authority, it implies a balance of power, which is shared by many in different degrees. In a nation-State, having strong traditions rooted in the people, where there exists too a high sense of moral and social responsibility, all may participate, but each in different degrees, according to the contribution he is able to make by virtue of his physical, intellectual and moral qualities to the general good. There can never be any equality in virtues, though it may be possible to attain a certain "equality of opportunity" as the phrase goes, or even a certain equality of wealth. Indeed, the fascist watchword, "Order, Discipline and Authority," seems to embody a principle having a strict relation to the necessary facts of life.

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A government, moreover, founded on this principle, would, indeed, be one strictly in accordance with Roman tradition, and the government of the Roman Church affords a perfect example of such a government in being. Nor should it be beyond the powers of human ingenuity to devise a system of civil government which would correspond to this idea and tend to throw up in effect a genuine aristocracy of merit, to which better than to any other body we could leave our destiny. This is precisely what fascism is attempting to do. It is attempting likewise to reconstruct society in a manner that will tend to canalize egoistic endeavour in directions which will in effect tend to serve the collective interests ; and to this end it is devising a system by which the State is built up on the basis of corporative life, working from the lower form of corporative life to the higher : the family, the trade union, the industrial corporation, the national corporative council, on the one hand, and, on the other, the communal, the provincial, the State admin-



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istration—the first series integrated with the second, and the whole cemented by a powerful executive, invested with power from above, but recruited from all classes of the population. There is no reason why such a system should not succeed or should become unduly rigid. The constitution of the Roman Church has avoided the latter danger; and its success is as remarkable as its stability.

At the same time, fascism is making every effort to educate the people, not merely with a view to more widely diffused knowledge, but more particularly with the view to the formation of character, the training of intuitive judgment (hitherto widely neglected) and the development of a civic and moral sense. It sets itself definitely to encourage a conscious patriotism on the one hand and religion on the other, as the main rational foundations of civic and moral activities. It aims not merely at being a negative force having the object of preventing crime and the undue interference by one individual with the

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liberty of another, but at being a positive force with the object of promoting virtue. Crime it regards as any action calculated to harm the collective interests or the authority of the moral law. Hence the necessity of an authoritative government, intolerant of any form of licence, which is the liberty to do wrong. For intolerance of wrongdoing entails no loss of liberty. On the contrary, it is the guarantee of true liberty. There should be no theoretical limits to such intolerance, however great the practical limits may be, for the contingent circumstances of life are such that we are often forced to make a choice of evils, or to move slowly towards our ideals in the face of ignorance and prejudice.

Finally, authoritative government depends on leadership by competent persons. Hence, again, the necessity of government by an *élite*. The right to lay down the law on any subject exists properly only as the result of a conquest over self and of the subject-matter. So the answer to the question: "Who is

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to decide what is right and wrong ? ” is : “ the competent authority.” We should see to it accordingly that our State constitutions tend to select for us leaders who are competent statesmen, one of whose needed qualities is firmness of character, coupled with a refined knowledge of what constitutes good.

To conclude : fascism refuses to admit that the moral law is not an objective reality, recognizable in the heart of all but the most hardened sinner, capable of being made more and more clearly recognizable by positively concerted measures to that end, and, parallel-wise, capable of being more and better applied by a selected competent authority. It proclaims God, in fine, as the supreme sovereign, and the State as God's temporal vicar, responsible to God for the people's good government. This is the meaning of the fascist ethical State, which is accordingly also the authoritative and unitary State, with a definite, indivisible ethical purpose and a definite ethical justification.

## CHAPTER V

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#### II. *Church and State*

FOR the benefit of the reader who may have found the last chapter rather difficult reading, we may sum up the conclusions arrived at as follows:—Sovereignty is implicit in the very idea of society ; but it arises in various ways and is not necessarily the reflexion of the general will of a community. The general will itself must either be regarded as no more than the life instinct of the herd, that is, an entirely irrational force ; and in this case, when it is manifested—though sometimes it may be irresistible and sometimes uncannily wise—it can have no right to dictate the course of events and should often be firmly resisted by the government in the interests of the community. Or, alternatively, the

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general will has no meaning unless it be regarded as being the equivalent of a completely disinterested manifestation of organized public opinion, that is, the will of an aggregate of individuals who have allowed their individual egoisms to be entirely transcended by their patriotic, humanitarian or religious—in other words, their social or universal selves; and since on the basis of a voting system it is impossible to tell whether the resulting expression of public opinion is or is not genuinely disinterested in the above sense, majority government or even the unanimous opinion of the whole adult population of a community, tested by means of a referendum, is not only no sure indication of the general will but, given that the force of particularist interests is, in the aggregate, almost invariably predominant, may be regarded with practical certainty as corresponding to nothing of the kind. The general will, therefore, in so far as it should be regarded as the basis on which government should rest, must either be discarded altogether or

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taken to mean no more than an approximate equivalent to the moral law, which every man and woman may read with at least a rough and ready accuracy by simply examining his or her conscience. And since the only alternative would be to acquiesce in the notion that the destiny of human society was completely in the hands of the blind forces of nature beyond all human control or else of conflicting individual interests and opinions, on which no objective valuation can be placed, each striving for mastery in an utterly amoral world, it is reasonable to presuppose that questions of right and wrong are indeed matters of objective and discernible truth, that goodness is the fundamental norm for all action, whether individual or collective, that tyranny means merely the triumph of evil, that liberty is no more than freedom from the bondage of sin (and is therefore the complement, the reverse side of the medal of law), that government ought to be in the hands of the best available people and therefore of a selected

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competent authority in order to ensure that actions should follow precept, and that in considering the merits of any proposed system of government the fundamental criteria are the degree in which authority is exercised by a strong executive composed of the best available people and the degree in which society is organized so as to provide a constitution which is neither too flexible nor too rigid, sufficiently broadly based to allow the people at large to exercise their moral right to participate in the government of their community in proportion to their social and intellectual capacities and, above all, to their moral sense of responsibility. For this reason, since there is no equality of capacities, moral, intellectual or physical, the ideal form of government is necessarily a hierarchy of authority, capable of enforcing what is right with due prudence, having regard to manifold contingent circumstances and to the irreducible facts of reality, which can be given a scientific demonstration in the form of natural,

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sociological and economic laws. Government, in other words, is an art, which should be reserved for statesmen—that is, to persons representative of their community's traditions and possessing a highly developed æsthetic sensibility with respect to this particular form of art, which like every other form of art requires intuitive judgment arriving at synthetic results—a fusion of the ideal and a sense of reality. Hence the task of education, above all, patriotic, æsthetic and religious, becomes a task of government of prime necessity, since together with the special task of devising an appropriate constitutional system it constitutes the major means of ensuring statesmanlike government, besides being the condition of any broadening of the basis of government and further social integration.

Government, finally, has not only the right but the positive duty, in accordance with such lights as it possesses, to aim at stamping out—even if prudence dictates that the process should be gradual—by the



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sanction of its laws every form of activity which is anti-social, anti-patriotic, anti-moral and anti-religious.

That, in fine, is the fundamental standpoint of fascism with regard to the State—a standpoint which gives the State a definite and objective ethical purpose and justification. God once more, as in the middle ages, is recognized as the supreme sovereign.

Granted that this standpoint is correct, the practical difficulties militating against the realization of the above principles will of course always remain. Perfection is not attainable in this world ; but provided we adopt the right principles we can strive within the limitations which nature and peccable human nature impose to attain relatively good results. Although class competition and other forms of rival egoisms can never be altogether done away with, something can be done to canalize them into channels of social utility. Many forms of egoism are at bottom no more than manifestations of vitality. Methods

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of suppression should accordingly often and as far as possible be substituted by methods of sublimation. To this end fascism is carrying out in Italy its great economic and social experiment of the corporative organization of society, to which we have already alluded, which we shall describe in somewhat greater detail in a further chapter. Fascism in any case refuses to admit that our egoisms can be usefully made the very basis of a governmental system. Hence it repudiates both party government and any form of individualistically organized electoral system, issuing in the sovereign power. In so far as such a system might preserve a place in a constitution, it must be limited to providing an organ of opinion or of technical and constructive criticism. It must not pretend to be more than a constitutional check on an independently constituted executive composed of persons forming a carefully selected *élite*.

Before dealing, however, with the constitutional aspects of fascism, a chapter

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must be devoted to its economic principles. But first of all it is proposed to deal with another important question—because of its close connection with the fascist idea of the ethical State outlined in the preceding chapter—namely, the relation of the State to any particular form of religion.

Fascism claims complete autonomy for the State, that is to say, the State must shoulder the whole of its own moral responsibilities *in the application of the moral law to contingent circumstances*. No State in this field can be dictated to by an outside body, even though that outside body may represent in fact, as the catholic Church claims to represent, a supernatural authority and an infallible guide in questions of religious and moral doctrine. At the same time fascism recognizes the independence of the catholic Church (and, for that matter, that of any organized teaching Church) and consequently the right of the latter to take such measures as it deems fit to safeguard its interests. If therefore between two such independent

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bodies, Church and State, opinions differ on some point or points involving the application of the moral law to contingent circumstances, the question must be fought out. Since, however, a fascist State starts from the same basis as do the teaching Churches, namely, by the recognition of the moral law as the supreme law, there is every hope, when differences arise, of their being capable of settlement after amicable discussion. Agreement, after all, is difficult only between persons accepting differing bases for discussion. Questions of principle are then involved. But between fascism and the teaching Churches, there are no fundamental differences in principle.

In claiming this autonomy for the State, fascism appeals to the fact that the State is an organism composed of successive generations of human beings sharing common traditions, an organism which can be observed in history to possess an autonomous life of its own, with certain natural rights corresponding to those of single

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individuals and of families. It has the natural right to preserve its life and build up its vigour. For this reason it has the positive duty to maintain its authority among its members, to exact sacrifices from its members for the sake of the common good, to provide a patriotic and civic education for its citizens, to put down by all the means in its power forces of disruption, the preaching of doctrines which set one class against another, in fine, as we have observed, all anti-social, anti-patriotic, anti-moral, anti-religious activities. It has the duty to observe to the best of its ability the sociological laws of conservation, integration and growth, which not only point to the above duties but to many others, as for example the maintenance of its national traditions corresponding to its racial experiences. Traditions of course can grow and modify, but cannot be brusquely violated without endangering the health and cohesion of the body politic. The limitations of its natural rights may accordingly be said to be, on the one

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hand, natural morals and natural religion, and, on the other, the natural rights of individuals and of families, aiming respectively at their own vital conservation and interior spiritual freedom, within the bounds again set by natural morals and natural religion, as well as by social and civic obligations. Within the limitations which the above principles lay down and suggest, however, the State must be the judge according to such lights as it possesses. If it is not its own judge, it has no alternative but to abdicate its authority to the body that is. Were this other body the catholic Church—to take a concrete case—it would mean setting up a theocracy or else identifying the State with a particular religion to such an extent that the logical conclusion would be, if not the coercion of all its members to conform with a particular religion, at least the identification of citizenship with the members of a particular religion and the absolute prevention of any form of propaganda by other religions. Such measures, however,

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would of course tend towards a violation of individual natural rights and would be the last thing the catholic Church itself would desire, because the catholic Church itself only values a person's religion in so far as his religion depends on convictions freely formed, and because it would bar the Church itself from claiming any right to develop its missions and schools in countries which happen not to be catholic.

Though I stand to be corrected, there is nothing as far as I know incompatible with catholic doctrine or catholic claims in this principle of State autonomy representing the fascist standpoint, as above explained—provided it be read as a set of general principles applicable to all States indiscriminately, i.e., as including non-catholic States.

To be sure, the catholic Church claims more than is here admitted in the absolute sense, or, as a practical proposition, in relation to ideal conditions. Very briefly stated, her absolute claims may be summarized as follows: She is the guardian

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of morality and hence claims the right to decide whether any civil law is harmful to the spiritual interests of citizens and to oblige the State to abrogate any spiritually harmful laws or to amend them. She claims accordingly that the Church *qua* Church is not subject to the State, but that the State is subject to the Church in all spiritual matters and in temporal matters as far as these affect spiritual interests. On the other hand she recognizes that the State is not subject to the Church in purely temporal matters, while, as far as non-catholic States are concerned, she is content to limit her claims to this: that catholics be not hindered in the practice of their religion.

Now the practical difficulties with reference to these absolute claims are concerned with the debatable territory of what constitutes spiritual interests affected by temporal matters and with what exactly is meant by catholic and non-catholic States. With regard to the latter point it might be said that it is quite obvious that certain



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States are catholic and certain other States non-catholic. Italy, Bavaria, Poland, Spain, the Dominion of Ireland, might be said to be quite obviously catholic States—Japan, Afghanistan, Greece, England, to be non-catholic States. But what of France? France is catholic by tradition and may be said to possess at least a large nominally catholic majority. But a considerable proportion of this catholic majority is non-practising, and power is largely in the hands of a definitely anti-catholic minority. Again, there are States like Holland where the catholic minority is so large that no Dutch government is in a position to disregard its claims. And even in obviously catholic countries like Italy, although the Protestant and Jewish elements are weak, there exists a large body of modernists and a larger body still of non-practising catholics. The ideal conditions from the Church standpoint may therefore, practically speaking, be considered inexistent.

In these circumstances the fascist stand-

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point emerges as one in which the catholic Church is not unprepared to acquiesce. Fascism insists, as we have seen, that the State is bound in the first place as a minimum obligation to protect and promote natural morals and natural religion. By natural morals is usually meant the principles concerning good action which can be known by reason alone (i.e., abstracting from revelation). Similarly, by natural religion is meant a system of speculative principles about God and His attributes known by reason alone, abstracting also from revelation. Fascism is accordingly concerned to suppress, within the limits set by prudence, all conduct and religion which are incompatible with reason. This corresponds with the absolutely irreducible claims of the catholic Church. Secondly, fascism sets a premium on religious instruction and is therefore in a position to come to an arrangement with the Church with regard to further claims; and, as between one autonomous body and the other, to cut the Gordian knot involving

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the debatable territory outlined above, by means of a *concordat*, which will be all the more favourable to the catholic Church in proportion to the catholicity of the State implementing the agreement. That is the manner in which fascism, in all good faith, proposes to deal with this thorny question; and as far as fascist Italy is concerned the question has been already amicably settled along these lines. Italy, as a predominantly catholic State, has, moreover, reinstated the catholic religion as the State religion and has shown herself prepared, in accordance with the terms of the *concordat* concluded in 1929 between herself and the Holy See, to carry out the logical implications of this reinstatement.

I have deliberately chosen to discuss this question in relation to the claims of the catholic Church partly because fascism in Italy, as a predominantly catholic country, has been forced to face it squarely, partly because, in asserting her claims, the catholic Church is asserting them also on behalf of every other religion the doctrines

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of which do not run counter to natural morals and natural religion. This point is well illustrated by the catholic standpoint with regard to education. The catholic Church insists that the rights of parents should be scrupulously respected. Thus if the majority of a country is catholic, the Church insists that the State would be violating the natural rights of parents if it did not provide for the teaching of the catholic religion in those schools frequented by the children of catholic parents—nay more, that such schools should definitely reflect a catholic atmosphere. Where, as in Italy, the vast majority of the people are catholic, this should properly mean that the State schools should be definitely catholic schools. But this, though it may mean in practice that in certain parts of the country insignificant denominational minorities must necessarily be sacrificed, does not mean that in districts where Protestants constitute the majority, Protestant schools should not be State-provided or that Protestants and Jews should be

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prevented from building and maintaining their own schools wherever they need them and that these schools should, provided they maintain a sufficiently high standard of instruction and conform in other respects to the State's requirements, be placed on a footing of equality with respect to examinations, diplomas, etc., with the State schools. The parents' rights in these matters are sacrosanct ; and in a country where various religious denominations flourish in large numbers, all should be treated on a footing of equality with respect to State aid. This is the catholic claim and it corresponds with what is right and just ; and it is entirely endorsed by fascism.

Fascism accordingly, in placing the moral law above the State, clearly repudiates that " deification " of the State advocated by certain forms of nationalism. At the same time, while it admits the independence and autonomy of the organized Churches and respects with a due sense of reality the latter's claim to possess

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the right of taking whatever measures that may seem fit to defend their interests, whenever these interests appear to be threatened, it upholds the principle of the State's autonomy and independence respecting the application of the moral law to contingent circumstances, and seeks to settle any differences of opinion arising out of its claim to autonomy and independence *vis-à-vis* the equally autonomous and independent organized Churches by means of some reciprocally satisfactory and amicable agreement in the shape of a *concordat*. The importance which it attaches, moreover, to religious education would lead it to proclaim a particular religion, wherever a particular religion might be said to occupy a predominant position in a State or might be said to be a veritable moulding influence in the formation of national traditions, as the State religion and to abide logically by the consequences, so that every act of the State may be given a pronouncedly religious aspect. It repudiates every form of agnosticism and would

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only be inclined to take up a neutral attitude, as distinguished from an agnostic attitude, with respect to organized religion in the event of the religion or the religious traditions of the country happening to be divided or diversely distributed. This defines the fascist attitude towards religion in marked contrast to that adopted by what might be called doctrinaire liberalism.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES OF FASCISM

PARALLEL to the political outlook of doctrinaire liberalism, to which we have shown fascism to be so strongly opposed, there is the modern economic system which often goes by the name of capitalism—an unfortunate label (for which Karl Marx is chiefly responsible) since it suggests that those who are opposed to the system would wish to abolish capital altogether, or at least private capital. It is true that socialism advocates the abolition of *private* capital; but nobody in his senses, socialist, communist or anarchist, has ever seriously proposed that capital itself should be abolished; and, on the other hand, it is quite easy to be radically opposed to the modern economic system without wishing to abolish private capital. Fascism



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is a case in point. Fascism is radically opposed to the drift of phenomena which characterizes the modern economic system; but is far from being opposed to the retention of capital in private hands. It is accordingly opposed both to capitalism and to socialism. It agrees with socialism in the latter's apparent repudiation of capitalism and offers an alternative remedy. It accuses socialism, moreover, of not really offering a remedy at all, but only the final consummation of capitalism itself. But it sees in socialism—in the complete nationalization and municipalization of capital—a purely theoretical situation only, which can never be actually reached, the reverse side of the same medal as the doctrine of *laissez faire*, advocated by the Manchester School—an equally purely theoretical situation, which, in spite of the vogue it once enjoyed in the class-room, never was reached and never could be reached. Both doctrines issue from the same type of mentality: both, fascism would say, are the child of

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excessive individualism, of the rejection of a dualistic and transcendental view of the universe, of the habit of abstract rationalisation—of rationalism and materialism. And the actual economic system—capitalism—is merely the practical situation lying between the two extreme theoretical situations of *laissez faire* and socialism. Capitalism has always been a little more or a little less of both—or, rather, it has moved from a little more of *laissez faire* and a little less of socialism to a little more of socialism and a little less of *laissez faire*. It will probably move still further away from *laissez faire* towards socialism; but it can never reach socialism. And there is nobody who proves this so conclusively as the socialist Bernard Shaw himself, in his *Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism*. So illuminating, indeed, have I found this book as a side-light on the economics of fascism that I have included it in the short bibliography at the end of this volume.

As a general denunciation of the evils of capitalism, for which word Shaw proposes

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to substitute the more suggestive and more appropriate word "proletarianism," it is unrivalled in the English tongue; and with this denunciation fascists will be found to be in more or less complete agreement. Shaw then goes on to point out that socialism (meaning nationalized and municipalized services and an equalization of money incomes) is already within our midst, a quite indispensable contribution to modern social conditions. With this point fascism also entirely agrees. Capitalism, it would say, is necessarily socialistic—in fact tends necessarily towards socialism as itself develops: besides, if it were not socialistic, it would operate under conditions of pure *laissez faire*, which is not only practically impossible but is a doctrine already theoretically bankrupt. The sum of individual interests operating in the widest possible conditions of economic liberty do not make up the collective interests. Few economists will dispute that fact nowadays. Moreover, in proportion as *laissez faire* was approached in

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Great Britain at the commencement of the Victorian era, it resulted in such terrible abuses that the public conscience was aroused and set the country marching ever since in the opposite direction.

The opposite direction of socialism, however, leads on towards a light which is like a will o' the wisp. It has no real consistency and is for ever beyond our reach. Shaw proves this conclusively. Not only does he make exceptions for certain classes of work (his own, for instance) which lie beyond the net of the nationalizer, but he proves that either society will be brought down in ruins with a crash and cruelty such as no man of good will would ever wish to contemplate, or the process of nationalization and municipalization of capital must be so slow as to defeat any possible estimate of when it would be complete : a matter in any case of generations and generations—so far ahead as to leave the vision of the socialist's new heaven and new earth an altogether dim and nebulous imagining.

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Meanwhile capitalism would continue to thrive, only in a form a little closer to the ideal of socialism. The State and municipality would be a larger employer of labour. The number of the proletariat would be in no way diminished. On the contrary, it would be increased. The number of owners of capital, who were at the same time controllers of capital, would have, on the other hand, diminished in proportion to the number of employed. And even if wealth came to be better distributed as far as money incomes were concerned, wealth would be less well distributed in the form of capital. There would be more people dependent on the few ; and it is just this economic dependence of the many on the few which is one of the most characteristic results of capitalism. Under the ideal of socialism we should all be dependent on one individual—the State. We should all be proletariats. Socialism is indeed thus shown to be the very consummation of capitalism, i.e. proletarianism : the perfect proletarian State.

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It might be rebutted that, under the ideal of democratic socialism, we would have a perfect co-operative society in that each adult would have an equal share in the capital and would therefore be his own employer. But the answer to this is a many-sided one. For one thing, the perfect type of co-operative society is where all the members belong to the same trade. Otherwise each single member necessarily loses all effective voice in the conduct of the business, owing to his ignorance of its various branches. Again, for an employee of a joint-stock company to possess one vote among millions as a shareholder in that company is not at all the same thing as employing himself. He is merely a cog in the wheel of a great machine ; and this is another disagreeable characteristic of both capitalism and socialism (proletarianism). The only apparent way of escape by which the employee in a socialist State might be able—in a certain degree—to assert himself, would be by combining with his fellows in the same trade. This

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would not be guild socialism, because the trades would be nationalized. Class distinctions might be abolished, but trade distinctions, nevertheless, assuredly would not. So the government of the great State machine under democratic socialism, would become the result of a struggle between trade interests. Conditions would accordingly be very little different—even if it were granted, as socialists maintain, that on a balance, at any rate, efficiency would not suffer (a doubtful proposition, to say the least)—than in the present conditions of the liberal *régime*, where government is the result of a struggle between class interests. The struggle between rival egoisms would merely be shifted. Thus argues the fascist. Things might, conceivably, not be worse on a balance than under the liberal *régime*; but the world would have certainly become a truly drab, monotonous, grey uniformity, the State a dismal middle-class bureaucracy, in no less danger than before of an upset equilibrium of forces degenerating into a wicked

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tyranny. Even if socialism changed its bias and stole from fascism its faith in a universal, objective and discernible moral law and devised a system of authoritative government responsible to the moral law and not to the people at large, the drawbacks of socialism as an essentially proletarian ideal would not be removed. And that itself, to the fascist, appears immoral, for the proletarian State spells the servile State.

Meantime—having attempted to point the way by which the abstract socialist case may be disposed of—capitalism under private initiative is moving rapidly along the same lines. Joint-stock companies and corporations are more and more driving out from business the small independent capitalist. Great trusts and what is called the rationalization of industry are gradually increasing the disproportion between the givers and the takers of labour. A greater and greater proportion of young people grown to be adults have no alternative but to accept work—if they can get it at all—for which they have no calling,



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doomed to toil for the rest of their lives at the beck and call of others: virtual slavery. The employee, besides, is feeling himself more and more a mere cog in the wheel of so many great anonymous machines. The single shareholder in these colossal companies is similarly losing more and more his voice in their control. More and more virtual control is falling into the hands of the managerial class, which is more and more directly concerned with the satisfaction of the material claims of its employees, after feathering its own nest, than with those of the owners of the capital, who only nominally control it. Labour conditions, where this is occurring, are consequently improving. In time we may even arrive, under the capitalism of part socialism and part private initiative, at things being so well organized that the precariousness of employment becomes greatly mitigated. But man does not live by bread alone. He is purchasing his greater material comforts and greater security at the price of freedom and of his

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life stereotyped. Personality, independence, the beauty that comes of individual workmanship, becomes every day less and less common. To rise into the managerial class entails already, besides general capacity, the capacity of suffering boredom gladly year after year; for work is losing the gift it once had of joy. Such satisfaction as it provides is the satisfaction of the ambition to rise requited, with the reminder coming too late that the control of a machine differs very little from being controlled by it. But there is no escape; for the successful man has then become too old to acquire the capacity to take the freedom and leisure which is at last offered him. Mass production, mass ideas, culture in tabloid form, which is no culture at all, a well-oiled groove to stick in or along which to move backwards or forwards—this is our super-capitalist civilization: a machine that turns out men like sausages and does its utmost to break those that have the originality to resist.

For all this grimness, socialism appears

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to offer no remedy whatsoever. What socialism aims at achieving is, in the first place, what private initiative, under the influence of America's example (where conditions are more favourable than in old Europe and where capitalism is more progressive and possibly more enlightened), may very well end in achieving, with the help of the State, of its own accord, namely, a higher material standard of living for workers (higher wages and greater leisure ; better sanitary conditions of work, etc. ; relative security of employment ; and a more rational use of machinery and scientific inventions). Socialism, on the other hand, imagines that by doing the same through the nationalization of the means of production, distribution and exchange, nobody need work for more than a few hours daily, the difference between the relative agreeableness or disagreeableness of the work to be performed being compensated not so much by higher wages as by greater leisure. For the equalization of money incomes, even if we allow for

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a certain graduation dependent on length of service or degree of responsibility, is part and parcel of the socialist scheme. But even if such a thing were possible, it could only be bought at the price of what would amount to practically genuine slavery or of making productive conditions relatively static. For if private initiative in business were not permitted, people might have no alternative but to spend their long leisure hours in study, self-education, hobbies and recreation (physical and intellectual); and although this might result in relieving some of the drabness of life under socialism, it would put a relative stop to the further accumulation of material wealth; for so long as people were using up only a relatively small portion of their available energy in the production of material wealth, so would the machinery for the production of material wealth be remaining, potentially, at all events, idle. If the State itself put this potentially idle machinery into motion by increasing it and holding out the necessary inducements

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to work it, away would go the promised leisure for all those who accepted the inducements held out to them. But this would upset the socialist scheme for equalizing wages ; while, if the State failed to prevent private business, the capitalism of private initiative would still flourish alongside of socialism and there would be no ideal socialist State. On the other hand, if the State took upon itself the unheard-of task of compulsorily adjusting, according to what could only be an arbitrary standard, the amount of leisure to be permitted at all (varying presumably according to the nature of the work), man would be reduced—at the best—to the condition of well-fed cattle. The double dilemma, academical as it may well be, appears incontrovertible. Fortunately, however, the question is purely academical. Pure socialism, as we have already attempted to prove, is an impracticable dream, even if it were demonstrated not to be altogether contrary to human nature. Those, on the other hand, who affirm that it is,

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have certainly very grave reasons to support their opinion.

Socialism (which might be called the capitalism of public initiative), to be sure, is looking to the achievement of other results besides that of improving the material conditions of the wage-earner: it is looking, in the second place, to putting an end to the appalling waste and misdirection of enterprise which takes place under the capitalism of private initiative. Where wealth is assuredly abundance, it stands aghast at the phenomenon of over-production, which is constantly recurring in present conditions. It is likewise horrified by the deliberate bringing about of scarcity in order that a comparatively few selfish persons may reap a richer reward by raising prices to an exorbitant figure. It is horrified at the rewards of capital in certain cases out of all proportion to the original risks run, bonus piled upon bonus years after the original promoters of the business are dead and buried, and after the business has amortized the whole of its original outlay

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and has settled down into representing a perfectly gilt-edged security. It is horrified at the establishment of immense monopolies and at the impotence of the public authorities, in actual conditions, to control them effectively, to prevent monopoly prices and even the suppression of new inventions by vested interests. It is horrified at the flagrant manipulation of prices by speculators and middlemen, at the constant profiteering that goes on all around us, at the exploitation of certain classes of producers as well as of the consumer by middlemen, at the manner in which prices are regulated exclusively by the interplay of supply and demand rather than on the basis of the costs of production and, consequently, at the so frequent absence of any just price. Again, it is horrified by the creation of artificial demands for and the canalization of capital into channels for the production of the silliest foibles and most extravagant luxuries, when there is a large potential demand for and a crying need of capital

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for the production of the common necessities of life. It views with dismay the export of capital or the transference of capital from a poorer district to a richer, merely because its utilization at home or in the poorer district would fail to pay (or fail to pay as well) the private capitalist, though it might well pay the community in the long run hand over fist; and it likewise views with dismay the dividends accruing in many cases from the permission to allow capital to flow unchecked into the more remunerative channels from a private profit-making standpoint, only to result in further capital being accumulated for the production of luxuries or for expenditure on parasitical forms of employment. Finally, it is shocked to see the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a large class of idlers, who give nothing in return, who live for pleasure and avoid all responsibilities. It sees money, which is an indent on the general wealth, in the possession of those who have performed no services to the community in return



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for the handling of it ; it sees debt accumulating on debt under a system which appears to confuse debt with wealth ; it sees money issued privately for private profit in spite of the sound old maxim that the issue of money is the prerogative of the crown ; the State. Usury, indeed, is rampant everywhere nowadays ; and both usury and profit-making at the expense of the national interests are looked upon as an innocent game under the cloak of the old, bankrupt *laissez faire* doctrine that the sum of individual interests makes up the national interests.

Now fascism entirely shares with socialism the horror and dismay which these practices exhibit, and points to a number of further blighting consequences and anomalies which stare us in the face under the capitalist system, such, for instance, as those caused by the increasing practice of production for profit rather than production for consumption. It sees fish unprocurable where the fish are caught until they return stale from the urban

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centres to which they have originally been dispatched. It sees dairy produce and other produce in the same situation. It sees fields of beautiful fresh fruit grown exclusively for the making of jams, except for a relatively small portion of it, retained at high prices for rich persons with the unabsorbed surplus hawked, before it rots, for the benefit of the poor. It sees canned goods substituted more and more for fresh goods. It sees 90 per cent. of a thoroughly industrialized country like England living for the most part on relatively unhealthy substitutes. But it is not only a question of anomalies, for fascism observes also either the decay or the gradual industrialization of agriculture, with the consequent depopulation of the countryside in either case, the disappearance of the healthiest elements of the population, the progressive accumulation of the population into immense urban areas, with all the attendant evils (slums, overcrowding, lack of light and air, etc., etc., etc., or, alternatively, soul-killing suburbia) and temptations.

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And in the conditions of employment inseparable from capitalism—i.e. proletarianism, it observes the increasing inability of persons to sublimate their creative energies, with the consequent premium on vice or alternatively on *neuroses*, due to efforts of suppression. Lastly, and worst of all, it sees, for all but a few, the end of economic freedom, that is, the opportunity of disposing of one's work and leisure (within the limits set by the moral law) in proportions that seem best to one's own judgment and needs. Hence fascism condemns capitalism (proletarianism) root and branch and fears it. It affirms that capitalism carries within itself the seeds of a terrible decay, leading eventually, if unchecked, to the moral and biological degeneration of the race and to the ruin of civilization.

It would be easy to continue the indictment; but sufficient has now been said on the negative side to indicate the state of mind with which fascism views both the present economic system and the socialist schemes for the correcting of it.

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The time has come to give an idea of the remedies which fascism itself proposes. It is necessary, however, to make first a few observations of a general character. With respect to orthodox economics, fascism asserts that its conclusions are vitiated to a great extent by the fact of its original elaboration under the influence of the Manchester School. It asserts that orthodox economics represents to a great extent the economics of individualism, that is to say, it is a system of individual economics and not a system of national economics. The sum—to repeat yet again in different words what has already been said several times (I fear, *ad nauseam*)—of what is individually profitable does not necessarily amount to what is nationally profitable. Fascism admits, it is true, that the more modern economists of the orthodox school have already modified their ultra-individualist attitude, but not yet sufficiently for it to be said that a true system of national economics has been substituted. Modern orthodox economics is still more

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of a description of actual economic conditions than a true, universal social science. Even so, economics must always remain a very restricted science. It must be based on the abstraction of an economic man. On this assumption it may be able to formulate a number of generalizations of very great practical value. But when it comes to the consideration of real life, other factors enter into the situation, which must be allowed to modify the purely economic conclusions. For man is not merely an economic animal. If man in his social aspects is to be studied scientifically, a more synthetic science is required than economics; and it is the science of sociology, into which the purely economic factors of life enter as part of the material to be sifted along with a lot of other factors, which attempts to supply the deficiency and to provide thereby a safer guide for the statesman and social reformer than the pure science of economics by itself. It is to sociology, then, as a science to which we must turn if we are

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to discover the abstract principles on the bases of which remedies may be found for the evils of our present lot.

Sociology, however, is still a science in its infancy. Fascism is aware of this, as well as of the extreme difficulty of applying successfully abstract principles to concrete circumstances the complexity of which often beggar analysis; and it realizes, therefore, that we have no practical alternative but to rely on the art of statesmanship and to feel our way forward within the limits of a few basic principles of outstanding importance (capable of being gradually extended) and apparent incontrovertibility. Within these limits the fascist method is accordingly experimental—progressively experimental.

Before anything else fascism would cling to the moral law—knowing that the moral law can never mislead. It must be both the end and the acid test of every experiment. So it begins by laying down the general proposition that man's exterior life is, within the limits set by the material

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factors of mundane existence, a reflection of the moral values which he sincerely respects. Consequently the best way to get rid of a bad economic system is to get rid of the perverted moral outlook that is the fundamental cause of it. Hence education in moral values is the real key to the situation. Exchange our actual moral values for something better and a modification of a bad system to a better one will then grow gradually, naturally and inevitably.

With its eye still on the moral law, fascism then starts by sanctifying the possession of property ; for it claims that the possession of property is the only absolute condition of economic freedom, and as such it may be said to be a natural right that a man should be secured of the opportunity of acquiring property for himself. The opportunity of acquiring property is also an opportunity for acquiring responsibility. This is as it should be, and responsibility begins at home. It is the family which holds within its limits—or should do so—the sweetest and deepest

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experiences of life. It is—or it should be—the expression of man's most intimate and passionate love; and such love is of God. It is right that we should be able to labour to secure not only our economic freedom, but the economic freedom of those nearest and dearest to us—to hand down the freedom we have gained to our children. So the right to acquire property and to transmit it intact are two important corner-stones of fascist economics. Besides, experience shows that the possession of private property breeds the maximum of initiative, as well as innumerable outstanding virtues.

Fascism accordingly sets out to do all it can to defend and encourage the institution of private property, especially in the form of small ownership, where normally there are no wage-earners. In Italy the number of such small owners or part owners still forms a very large proportion of the population: small agricultural proprietors or half-share farmers, small shopkeepers owning their own shops, small



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independent business men of all kinds, artisans owning their own tools. This is the class which fascism honours most. It is the class in which the sacred institution of the family merges with that of property. Here too we have genuine freemen, forming the backbone of a country—and, as far as the agriculturist is concerned, producers for consumption rather than producers for profit. In central Italy particularly, this class flourishes, so that each village almost is an agricultural co-operative society of small proprietors and a colony of small owners of shops and of artisans—while, in between the villages, the larger estates form virtually a series of another kind of co-operative society, composed of half-share farmers clustering round the central estate buildings. In these districts the general standard of living is high, the houses clean, the cooking excellent with generally an abundance of good food and drink, and there is an air of well-being and contentment about, of activity and joy in life. These peasants

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are no dull sods of the earth, but intelligent and progressive in their arts, refined in manner, naturally artistic and musical, wise in the secrets of nature, the representatives of an old race which has preserved its vitality and the inheritors of a wonderful patrimony of tradition, the accumulation of generations of experience of life. Compared to the class of wage-earners in Italy or any other country, they are an altogether superior people. In Italy now, all that can be done for them is being done for them by a government which beams on them benevolently, and every effort is being made to strengthen and increase them as a class, to spread the social and economic system they represent into those parts of Italy less characterized by it. The practical abolition of death duties in the first and second degree by the fascist government was aimed chiefly at benefiting this class, apart from the moral significance of the measure as a defence of the family ; and under the fascist corporative system, this class has become organ-

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ized for the first time and so placed in a position the better to defend itself against the inroads of industrialism and big business. It would be out of place here, however, to detail the manner in which fascism is promoting the defence and spread of this class in Italy. It is sufficient to say that it is a many-sided policy which is not neglecting the need felt in the country districts for better facilities for culture and amusements, as well as financial credit. The great fascist After Work Institution, which operates all over the country, in town and countryside, is endeavouring to bring to the latter some of the amenities of the former. In fact, to watch fascism operating in the countryside is rather like seeing the dreams of George Russell's (*Æ*'s) rural civilization gradually materializing.

Together with the class of small, almost self-sufficing family proprietors, fascism aims at favouring the genuine co-operator, especially the co-operatives of production. These co-operators, members of a single trade, own their capital in common and

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share out the profits. They also represent a class of freemen ; and they are encouraged by every means accordingly. Add to these classes the professional classes (doctors, lawyers, artists of all kinds and degrees, the ministers of religion, engineers, etc., etc.), the majority of which have taken up their profession in response to the inner call of special interests and in-born talents (here, even in conditions of dependence, we have that kind of service which approximates to one of perfect freedom), and we get a section of the nation which, together with the larger property owners, fascism wishes to see representing, as a condition of a really healthy State, the overwhelming majority of citizens. Between the two classes of property owners and professional men, the artisan is the connecting link ; and, it is claimed, the interests of most of these people (the big proprietors and perhaps some of the big professionals are an exception) almost automatically coincide with the national interests. Taken as a whole, among these

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classes wealth is extremely well distributed. Most of their production is production for consumption or for expenditure on necessities and small comforts. Profiteering among them is, generally speaking, insignificant—too insignificant to be regarded as a national danger. When they flourish, therefore, national needs almost look after themselves, if not quite. They represent the ideal of the “distributive” State. Indeed, in this respect fascism approaches the ideal of that group of writers in England, of whom Chesterton and Belloc are the better-known names.

When, however, we come to examine the case of the larger owners of capital, the need of a supplementary principle to that sanctifying the institution of private property comes to be felt; and fascism proclaims this supplementary principle as one of the cardinal principles underlying its economic policy, namely, that all forms of property be regarded also as a public trust. No man may do exactly what he likes with his own. That would be licence.

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No man has the right to do anything which is harmful to the collective interests. It is not a question merely of respecting a neighbour's equal rights before the law, but a moral obligation so to contrive one's life that one's interests become, as far as is humanly possible, coincident with the public interests. This represents the limit of a man's individual economic rights ; and the principle itself is a definite corollary of the fascist definition of liberty already given, namely (to use the words of St. Paul) that liberty is freedom from the bondage of sin. The bonds of moral obligation limit licence but not freedom. So the obligation to use one's capital in a manner coincident with the collective interests, to regard one's private property as being simultaneously a public trust, is no infringement of liberty or of proprietary rights.

The manner in which fascism in Italy is attempting to enforce this principle will be briefly described below. But before doing so there is another principle to be

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laid down. It is this : that the pursuit of a maximum aggregate national wealth, as an economic end, should be subordinated to the pursuit of a healthy social system. In other words, general well-being is more dependent on a healthy social system than on great aggregate riches. Well-being does not necessarily vary in proportion to the collective income. The latter enters into the problem as an important element ; but the factor of a healthy social system, of which in turn a well adjusted distribution of wealth is another factor, is a still more important element. To give examples of what is meant : a community in which there was one exceedingly rich family, one thousand moderately rich families and twenty thousand families living on the margin of subsistence might have a total collective income greater than another community composed of one hundred and one moderately rich families, ten thousand families less rich and ten thousand families just comfortably off. But the latter community would reflect the

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greater well-being—and its greater well-being would be all the greater, relatively speaking, if in the first community the great majority was dependent on the few and in the second the great majority was composed of independent producers. To give another example: the income of Great Britain is variously estimated at five to fifteen times as great as that of France. But it is exceedingly doubtful whether the general well-being in Great Britain is even equal to that of France. Those, indeed, who have a wide experience of living conditions in both countries generally agree that the well-being in France is the greater; and the difference to France's advantage lies in the better distribution of wealth and a better social system. France is a country of small proprietors and co-operators. It is still a country where the family is considered the essential unit, rather than the individual; and where the social relationships between different classes still preserve some of the old traditions, handed down from the



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middle ages, tending to make the conditions of those classes economically dependent upon others more humane, less stereotyped, less that of master and man, and consequently less exasperated. The latter case is still clearer in Italy and Spain. But the national aggregate wealth of Italy and Spain is so much smaller than that of France that greater weight has to be given to this factor than in the case of France. France probably represents the country in Europe to-day where, on a balance of factors, the well-being is greatest.

This leads us to the consideration of those classes whose economic lives directly depend on others—the proletariat class. This class cannot be done away with altogether. They are the poor, even when they are comparatively well off, who are always with us. No society can dispense with them altogether. How then to deal with them other than by the general policy of keeping their number down as far as possible in proportion to the total population? The fascist answer is : by insur-

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ing them as decent conditions of employment as possible (that goes without saying); by granting them certain definite rights in the form of a labour charter; by giving them the sense of their interests being identified with those of the industry in which they are workers and—more important still—of being soldiers in the service of their country; by widening the opportunities of advancement within their class and of escaping from it altogether; and lastly, most important of all, by bringing the employer and the employed together socially so that they get to know each other, so that the personal element enters into their mutual relationship, so that wage-earning work becomes proportionately humanized. By these means some kind of approach to that kind of service which is perfect freedom can be made for this class. Take, for instance, the lot of domestic servants. Granted decent conditions of work, every domestic servant knows that his or her situation depends entirely on the manner in which he or

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she is treated. Domestic servants need respect, not patronage. They need to feel themselves members, albeit subordinate members, of a family, whose interests are identified with theirs. The happy servants of a household are those who feel they occupy a position of trust, of gratitude and respect, well earned and acknowledged, like that occupied by an old family nurse : one of the few common survivals in industrialized countries of the servant whose dependence has remained perfectly humanized. There are, of course, exceptions ; and in the less industrialized countries the exceptions are often the rule. But where the humanizing intervention of baby is absent, domestic servants are tending to slip more and more into the position of exasperated, class-conscious drudges, willing workers only in proportion to the bribe offered or extorted.

Fundamentally it is all a moral question. Where there exists a genuine Christian spirit (not a reflected one, nor one applied according to a set of formulas or favourite

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biblical texts) the question resolves itself in proportion to the closeness of the personal relationship between the master and the man. The spirit above all else is therefore what is needed. But in proportion to the degree of separation between the class of employee and the class of employer, so a system is required to bridge the gulf of mutual incomprehension ; and the fascist corporative organization of society in Italy is designed first and foremost to fulfil this purpose. Secondly, it is designed to enable the State, as representing the collective interests (and no other body can do this), to control individual (class or trade) egoisms which of their own accord fail to canalize themselves into channels coincident with the collective interests ; in other words, to enforce the principle of property regarded as a public trust. The corporations are designed to become both the major means and, what is even more important, the founts of knowledge and experience on the basis of which interference by the State on behalf

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of the collective interests may be undertaken with progressive wisdom and effect. For even though we acknowledge the need for State intervention with respect to private business, in order that society may be rid of the abuses, it is not sufficient to promulgate laws of "thou shalt not this" and "thou shalt not that." The complexity and expertness of modern business makes such negative injunctions (even if they assume a positive form) both easy to elude by persons minded to do so, and easily futile by reason of their ingenuousness. If the means of production, distribution and exchange are to be *socialized*, without having recourse to the means advocated by socialists (namely, nationalization and municipalization), the control by the State must be positive. And if it is to be positive and if it is to be wise (lest the fowl that lays the golden eggs be sacrificed) it must be a control from within and not one from without. Hence it must be a control which exhibits a definite form of co-operation between the

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representatives of the State and the representatives of all the factors of private initiative and production. Nobody must be left outside the system. Private economy and public economy must be thoroughly integrated, in such a way that both the various factors of production (i.e. the various factors of labour and capital) may be integrated with respect to each industry and branch of industry ; and there must likewise be integrated the rights of the individual and the State.

This is the principle on which is based the corporative organization of society of the fascist State. The specific form of organization to be adopted may, of course, vary with the needs and character of different peoples. But some kind of organization based on the above principle is an essential of the fascist State. Within the limits of this principle and of the general principles, mentioned above, on which this principle is itself based, and by means, chiefly, of the organization itself which arises out of this principle, the

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problems to be solved must be solved progressively as accumulated and progressively accumulating experience dictates. This is the fascist alternative to socialism.

The following, by way of illustration, is a short description of the corporative organization as it is being developed under fascism in Italy. The reader should, however, carefully bear in mind that fascism does not expect the Italian model to be copied slavishly elsewhere.

The capitalists of every branch of industry form a union. So do, for the same industry, each category of employees engaged in it—one union and one union only for each category. The elected representatives of each union are brought together to create a corporation for their particular industry, in the form of a permanent organization of which they constitute, so to speak, the Board of Directors. The President of the Board, however, is a State official, nominated by the Ministry of Corporations. The corporation itself, though run by its own staff of officials,

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under the main direction of its members, is a definite organ of the State, a decentralized department, so to speak, of the Ministry of Corporations, and is responsible directly to the Minister of Corporations. As for the unions, members of each corporation, their articles of association, which must provide for a number of social, economic and technical activities, must receive official recognition from the Ministry of Corporations, while the corporation undertakes to supervise and co-ordinate their work. The main business of the unions, however, is to defend the economic interests of the class they represent. The main work of the corporations on the other hand is to harmonize these interests in so far as they conflict, and to carry out duties of a social and technical kind. Under its supervision labour exchanges for the industry are established, statistics of all kinds kept, technical schools created, commissions of enquiry appointed with a view to diminishing costs of production and "rationalizing" the industry,



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etc. It sees that the unions adhere to the law, carry out their obligations with respect to the insurance, etc., of workers, and to the strict application of collective contracts and the terms of the Labour Charter, which defines the principles of equity and justice in the domain of production. So too it co-ordinates the social work undertaken by the unions with the work of the national after-work and maternity and infant welfare institutions and affords the worker protection and advice, though a special national institution for which it acts as a decentralized office, with respect to the recovery of insurance benefits, medical assistance, emigration, etc., etc. Then it sees to it that employers carry out the terms of collective contracts entered into between its members with respect to all workers indiscriminately engaged in the industry, even to those who are not members of the recognized unions forming the corporation. No worker engaged in the industry is thus denied the benefits of a collective contract. These contracts

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themselves are frequently drawn up under the auspices of the corporation ; and the latter acts as a means of conciliation between capital and labour in regard to any disputes which may arise in the event of either party wishing to refer to it the dispute. Finally, plans are on foot by which in conjunction with the Prefect of the Province, who is the chief local representative of the State executive, prices may be regulated with a view to eliminating profiteering and usury.

The various local unions are federated into national unions and again grouped into thirteen great confederations of production, six representing capital, six labour and one the professional orders (civil servants receive a separate organization altogether). Inversely the corporations, which are national bodies, have each local decentralized organizations corresponding to the local unions ; while in Rome there is constituted under the Ministry of Corporations a central corporative council, which acts as a kind of social,

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technical and economic parliament, composed of the representatives of capital and labour appointed by the various corporations, of the central co-operative institute (which acts, so to speak, as the corporation of the various co-operative societies) and of the federation of professional men. It is presided over by the high officials of the Ministry of Corporations, the Minister and the under-secretary of State, and there are co-opted to work on it, besides, a certain number of experts and representatives of other ministries. This central council has quasi-legislative powers within the limits set by the legislative measures passed by Parliament. With it and by its help the Ministry of Corporations co-ordinates and controls the whole of the corporative organization of the State as outlined above.

Strikes and lock-outs are forbidden; and in the event of a dispute between capital and labour arising, which the good offices of the corporation has failed to settle, the question is passed to be adjudi-

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cated upon to the ordinary civil Courts of Appeal constituted for the purpose into a Magistrature of Labour. Such courts have plenty of experience in assessing civil claims and are well adapted to perform this special function. The judges are aided by expert assessors appointed by the disputing parties and decide the question on a basis of equity, *all things considered*—that is, the ultimate interests of the respective parties to the dispute, of the industry and of the nation, after reviewing all the technicalities of the question as well as the state of trade and of employment, the cost of living, the prices and profits of the industry, etc. The general principles laid down by the Labour Charter constitute the principal landmarks by which the judges may be guided towards a just decision.

By means of this elaborate but flexible organization, which is entirely financed by the union rates and is susceptible to gradual improvement, supplemented by individual laws and by enterprises directly

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and indirectly run by the State and municipalities, it is calculated it will be possible to see to it eventually that all property shall conform to the standard of a public trust. If things, moreover, go on as steadily as they are doing at present in Italy, men who are already in their middle age will see before they die a society in which every producer is a member of a corporation (including the co-operative producers) and every consumer a member of one or more consumers' co-operatives. For the first class it will have become naturally easier to be, *qua* producers, good citizens, on account of the corporative life which they will find themselves leading, willy-nilly, and more difficult to be bad ones, on account of the controlling influence of the State. For the second class prices will tend to correspond to the minimum; and because unfair prices and undue profits will have become the exception, money incomes will have much less unequal, while the rich who remain will have corresponding social responsibilities. These results,

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besides, will have been brought about by co-operation between the State, private capitalists and labour. The State will have become a predominating factor of control, but it will not have taken the place of private initiative. All factors of production will have been consulted and all legitimate private interests (that is, private interests that do not clash with the general interests) will have been duly respected. That is the driving idea behind the whole scheme. For further details the English reader cannot do better than consult the volume entitled *A Survey of Fascism*, published under the auspices of the International Centre of Fascist Studies in Lausanne (Ernest Benn, Ltd., London, 1928), or, alternatively, Alberto Pennachio's *The Corporative State* (New York, 1927), published by the Italian Historical Society of America. Both these publications have an excellent chart illustrating the organization in diagrammatic form.

As far as direct State enterprise is concerned, the Italian Labour Charter lays

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down the guiding principles very clearly :  
“ The corporative State considers that private initiative in the field of production is the most efficacious and most useful instrument in the interests of the nation . . . the whole body of production must be considered as a united effort from the national point of view . . . the private organization of production being a function of national interest, the organizer of any economic undertaking shall be responsible to the State for the direction given to production . . . intervention by the State in economic production should take place only when private initiative is lacking or is insufficient or when the political interests of the State are involved.” Hence fascism is actually reluctant to engage on schemes of nationalization or municipalization. A *prima facie* case in favour of such activity requires first to be demonstrated—and of course there are a great many things which fulfil this proviso. As time goes on a great many other things may come to be added. And in addition to enterprises directly

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State-run, there is an intermediate type of enterprise which fascism favours rather than have recourse to the former. Such bodies the Italians call *enti parastatali*, which might be translated as "semi-State institutions," such as the Bank of Italy, which is an autonomous body controlled by the Treasury, or the Social Insurance Institute, which constitutes a State monopoly respecting all forms of social insurance run on a mutual basis by which it is meant that profits must be devoted either to diminishing insurance rates or increasing the benefits or extending assistance to the insured by way of clinics and hospitals and sanatoria and means of profitable recreation, etc., or extending the scope of insurance, or directly combating the causes of disease, or financing better housing conditions for the insured—that is, in one way or another, directly or indirectly, returning the money with interest into the pockets of those who have provided it in the first instance. Many other examples of this kind of State enter-



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prise in fascist Italy could be quoted, each possessing a special character. The State railways, for instance, are run in Italy as an autonomous company, profits being devoted either to increasing the wages of its employees or lowering tariffs or improving the plant or extending railway communications or running road transport to supplement the railways or even to investments in other semi-State institutions such as the State petroleum company (instituted with the object of breaking the monopoly as far as Italy is concerned of the great world petrol trusts—later it may develop into a State petrol monopoly) and thereby securing cheaper supplies of a class of goods required in large quantities by the State railways. Much can be done by the State too by way of co-ordinating charitable work, eliminating overlapping and providing additional funds—witness the great after-work and maternity and infant welfare institutions which have been created by Mussolini's government—while it is a fascist principle that the State must take

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upon itself the initiative, with or without private co-operation, for all kinds of public works—road building, land reclamation, the construction of canals, aqueducts, railways, power stations, ports, workmen's dwellings, etc., etc., which may be calculated to pay the community hand over fist in the long run, which limits the extent to which capital may be exported or driven out of the poorer districts or diverted to luxury trades, but would not for one reason or another offer sufficient temptation to purely private initiative. The Banks of Sicily and Naples, which come under the direct supervision of the Treasury, have the special purpose of fostering enterprises of this kind in the poorer districts of the South.

The purely social aspects of the fascist corporative system should here be emphasized. Through the corporations the various classes engaged in each industry are brought together in a permanent and active form in social work. They learn thus to understand each other

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better ; and the situation of the wage-earner tends to be humanized, as in this way he is brought into contact with his employers. The better class of the latter under the capitalist system aim, of course, often, on their private initiative, at doing this. But under the corporative system, the indifferent or bad employers cannot escape their moral obligations. Within the corporation too the limits of the differences of interest between capital and labour come to be understood and their common interests, which are the interests of the industry taken as a whole, come to be appreciated. An additional ladder is also thereby formed by which talent, economic, political, technical or social, may rise to prominence. Finally, the presiding influence of the State, intervening in favour of the national interests, promotes the growth in both masters and men of a national conscience in relation to their industry, so that their work tends to take on the character of a burden shouldered for the common good ; and

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this in turn is a great help in the difficult task of humanizing the lot of the wage-earner. It gives him something of the ideals of a soldier and provides some compensation for any lack of interest he may have in the routine of his daily task.

The Italian Labour Charter, on which the working of the corporative organization largely hinges, is a remarkable document. It defines the basic rights and obligations of both capital and labour; and, as we have seen, forms the rules of equity according to which disputes between capital and labour are settled in the last resort. Fascism refuses to admit that the community should suffer while individuals settle their differences by a trial of strength. The State representing the community has the right to intervene, but it can only do so effectively if its decisions bear the hall-mark of justice. As we have seen, actions are moralized in proportion as they become universalized, so that a decision in the interests of the community represents a definite moral step forward.

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over the victory of a sectional interest. But more is accomplished by the Labour Charter. 'The moral law, the universal law, enters into the question even more directly; and in order to safeguard a decision, based essentially on the moral law, from being arrived at in too great a sense arbitrarily, it is necessary for the guidance of judges that all the matters in dispute be made referable to a codified set of principles. This is what the Labour Charter purports to be. In itself it is no more than a declaration of rights; but the principles it enunciates have since been embodied in the laws of the land, which it is the business of the judges to administer. The decisions therefore are not subject to any equivocation.

This intervention of State justice in disputes between sectional interests within the State is a striking illustration of the fascist idea; and the principle might well be extended into the international field. Unless the moral law, documented in the form of a set of apposite principles, comes

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to be universally acknowledged, international life remains at the mercy of warring interests. What is good in the League of Nations is (apart from its utility as a piece of international machinery) precisely the good-will which lies behind it. What is lacking in the League of Nations, as an instrument for peace, is that, despite the good-will which lies behind it, the selfish interests of the big powers and of their *clientèle* of little powers—and especially of the “capitalist” nations, who control the available colonial territories and raw materials of the world—remain the driving forces of its action. Just as it is impossible to bring class warfare within a community to an end without defined principles of equity and justice, based on common moral and social needs without respect of persons, by which the merits of conflicting class claims may be assessed and adjudicated upon in the general interest, so international strife must continue until, as a first step at least, a charter can be framed (like the Labour

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Charter in Italy) by agreement among the powers, setting forth the principles of equity and justice as between nations in the form of a common code of morality. Such a code will not acquiesce any more in the notion of "having's keeping" than in the notion of "taking's having." The "proletariat" nations must have their rights defined and such rights must be what Shaw would no doubt call communistic, but what fascism would be content to call equitable. Life is dynamic and not static. Peace can only be secured temporarily by forcibly maintaining the *status quo*. If that is all that can be done, an explosion sooner or later—and all the greater and more disastrous the longer it is deferred—will be bound to ensue. Likewise, if nothing more can be done, the "proletariat" nations must perforce adapt their action to capitalist principles, just as the working proletariat, as Bernard Shaw has conclusively demonstrated, has been forced to play its own game of selfish action (ca' canny and al

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the rest—what Shaw calls “trade union capitalism”) as their chief weapon of defence. A capitalist system makes capitalist morals compulsory for all; and when a trade union restricts production or enforces its claims by a strike, capitalists under the prevailing capitalist system should have nothing to say, if they had any grain of intellectual honesty, but that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Likewise, if a “proletariat” nation in the last resort enforces its interests by war, the “capitalist” nations should properly withhold from casting stones. They are really the cause of the whole pother. Fascist principles accordingly hold out a way of escape from international strife in proportion as they spread. It is a way which is not the same as socialism but is in certain respects similar. It claims, however, to be a better way because more practicable, more in conformity with human nature and with reality.

In some respects, indeed, fascism resembles guild-socialism. They both share



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the ideal of basing the organization of society on trade corporations and they agree on insisting that all private property should be regarded also as a public trust. Where they part company is chiefly on the question of democratic individualism. Guild-socialism like all forms of socialism clings to the idea that government should be, in effect, the resultant of conflicting individual interests (in its case, trade interests). It would have the government responsible to the people organized individualistically and rejects the idea of the authoritative State, responsible to God only for the good government of the people in the general interests. On the other hand, it should by now be apparent that with regard to certain meanings of the term, fascism is not undemocratic. For one thing it is no respecter of persons in the sense of favouring individual sectional interests. It subscribes to the ideal of the French revolutionary army, namely, that the humblest private soldier should be allowed to carry in his knapsack the *baton*

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of a marshal of France. Thirdly, it advocates a government broadly based upon the people, one in which individual sectional interests are given a hearing and are invited to co-operate in the task of promoting the interests of the whole community. But it insists that the task of government is a specialist's task, and should be reserved for specialists in the form of an aristocracy of talent and moral responsibility. It insists that the State should not be divided against itself in its direction, and that it should form a united, integrated whole, a true unity in its necessarily human diversity, with its executive structure a hierarchy of authority, recruited from all classes of the population but deriving its authority from above and not from below.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE UNITARY AND INTEGRATED STATE : THE ITALIAN FASCIST CONSTITUTION

WE may now almost take leave of principles. The reader should be in a position, after noting what has gone before, to exercise his ingenuity in devising a constitution in accordance with the fascist idea, suitable to the conditions of his own country. The form which the fascist constitution is assuming in Italy does not pretend to universal application. It is but an example of what can be done. It is but one architectural construction in the fascist style. The question of monarchy versus republicanism is, for example, not affected by it. That is a question of national tradition or else one of expediency. On the other hand, should a republican constitution be preferred, it would have neces-

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sarily to conform more to the ideal represented by the aristocratic republic of Venice (except that it must not entail a closed, hereditary aristocracy) than to that realized in nineteenth-century republics which have grown out of the ruins of the old monarchies, and have been nurtured on liberal and democratic principles.

In Italy, the monarchical tradition—that is, in the royalist sense—is not very strong except in Piedmont. Most Italians feel, in their bones, that the principle of an hereditary royal house was disposed of, once and for all, with the expulsion of the Tarquins from Rome several centuries before Christ. They realize that the principle was only re-introduced by the barbarian invasions. They feel—and fascism reflects this feeling—that the legally sanctioned presence of an hereditary privileged caste, even if confined to a single family—is anomalous, theoretically unjust and even a trifle absurd. They look upon it as an institution not quite civilized, as the Roman and

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Greek conceived of civilization. Indeed, they look upon it as a relic of barbarism. They are prepared to accept it, on the other hand, as an exceedingly useful expediency, very much in the spirit in which the prophet Samuel reluctantly condescended to the anointing of Saul as the first King of Israel.

Monarchy has accordingly been accepted by fascism in Italy, mainly as a decision of expediency. A fascist republic would entail the selection of a President, probably for life, by some complicated machinery calculated to ensure that the President would be a gentleman acceptable to all patriotic trends of opinion in the country as a man embodying in his person the national tradition and one whose integrity of character was above suspicion. That the selection of such a man on every occasion would not be beyond the capacity of some ingeniously devised system is proved by the extraordinarily successful record of the Doges of Venice over a period of more than a thousand years. Never-

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theless, the death of each President would mean an interruption in the country's normal life ; and this interruption an hereditary monarchy obviates. Under the monarchical system continuity is never broken ; and this constitutes an extremely weighty practical argument in favour of monarchy. Moreover, in the actual historical conditions of Italy, the crown constitutes an important factor operating in favour of the country's unity. The House of Savoy has magnificent and universally acknowledged national traditions. It has served the country conspicuously well throughout its history. The unity of Italy was achieved largely through the wisdom and leadership of Victor Emanuel II ; and modern Italy is especially grateful for the part played by the House of Savoy during the past hundred years, since Italy initiated her struggle for independence and unity. It should be noted too, in particular, that it was owing to the courageous action of the present King that the fascist march on Rome in 1922 was carried

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through to a successful issue without open civil war, and without involving the army in politics. Finally, were any question entertained of the abolition of monarchy, the unity of the country, on which fascism lays so much stress, would be weakened, owing to the strong monarchical tradition in Piedmont and among large sections of the people elsewhere.

Consequently the Italian fascist constitution accepts the monarchy and would strengthen it. If the King himself is overshadowed in the popular imagination by the dominating personality of Mussolini, this is unavoidable. A man like Mussolini and the circumstances of a revolution are not everyday occurrences. But Mussolini is at pains to uphold the King's prestige and to bring his person and the institution he represents constantly before the public mind; and there is no doubt whatever that the monarchy in Italy to-day is stronger than it has ever been before.

Kingship in Italy, however, remains essentially constitutional. The King reigns

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but he does not rule, exactly as in Britain. His one practical prerogative is the choice of his Prime Minister from among the more prominent members of the dominating party, exactly as in England. Where the difference comes in is not in the King's prerogative, but in the abolition of party government and in the position occupied by the Prime Minister himself under the fascist constitution.

And here we come to the consideration of a very important distinction. Unless this distinction is made, it is impossible to understand the true situation in Italy; and in order to understand it the reader must be possessed of an historical sense, the essence of which is to see things dynamically, that is, as moving in time. Fascism has abolished the party system; yet, at the same time—here and now—it is still only a party, the dominating party. A distinction must accordingly be made between what is meant by a fascist in the sense of one who accepts the principles of fascism and reflects its *Weltanschauung*, as



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set forth in the previous chapters, and what is meant by a fascist in the sense of a definitely accredited member of a revolutionary party, dominating the Italian State to-day. Until such time as the new constitution is quite complete and tried, until such time as the whole country has become for all intents and purposes completely "fascisticized" (and this may take a whole generation of time), the fascist party must necessarily fail to coincide for all practical purposes with the whole nation. But its definite intention is to bring about this coincidence. Like the Gods in Wagner's Ring, the fascist party is deliberately working for its eclipse as a party—for the downfall of Walhalla. When that day comes the King's prerogative of choosing the Prime Minister will be able to be exercised as a national choice from among the most prominent national figures, engaged in politics and belonging to a special constitutional body or council formed for the purpose of providing a panel out of which the King will be

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absolutely free to make his choice. This council is now known as the Grand Fascist Council. This name may even survive, in so far as fascism will have identified itself completely with the nation. But meanwhile the Grand Fascist Council, during the period of transition from the old pre-revolutionary order to the new fascist order, must necessarily remain a party as distinguished from a truly national organ. It is already, of course, a national organ from the strictly legal standpoint, and owing to the fact that its members are imbued with the fascist idea, which sets the nation above party or class. But at the same time, in the actual historical circumstances, while there are large numbers still of patriotically minded people who have not allowed themselves to be assimilated to the fascist idea, who still believe in party government either as a necessity or as a useful expediency, whose mentality is what the fascists dub as "demo-liberal," to be included in the panel, now composing the council, means

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membership of the exclusive fascist party organization. The time will come, on the other hand, if the fascist revolution accomplishes its purpose—the reader, I hope, will forgive me if I seem to be labouring the point—when the members of this panel, of this council, will cease to bear a party ticket, and will be nothing more nor less than the cream of political talent in the country; while the present fascist party will have become no more nor less than a national constitutional organization devised for the purpose of securing a progressive selection of statesmen up to the point in which a member may become entitled to enter the privileged lists of this council.

Thus—prescinding from the historical conditions of to-day—the fascist constitution in Italy has, first, a King: a constitutional monarch, reigning but not ruling, the principle of the nation's continuous life, the first and ultimate representative of the nation taken as a whole, and enjoying the prerogative of selecting

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his Prime Minister, who rules the country in his name, and is responsible to him and through him, as the temporal vicar of God, for the country's good government.

Next, there is a council, composed of about thirty members, the result of successive stages of selection, under the auspices of a national political organization, from among the various cultural and productive organizations in the country, and thus representing the pick of the political talent available, from among whom the King will choose his Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister is the head of a Cabinet of departmental ministers, and not merely a member, *primus inter pares*, of the Cabinet. The Cabinet ministers are selected by him, from wherever he thinks best, and are responsible to him for their departments, exactly as he himself is responsible to the King. Under the Minister of the Interior come the heads of the local provincial divisions of the country: the Prefects of the provinces; and under

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the Prefects of the provinces come the heads of the communes (large and small), known as the "Podestà" (corresponding to our mayors). Then, parallel with this organization, which represents the major line of executive officers, there is the corporative organization of the State, which we have already described: the Minister of Corporations, aided by his Council of Corporations, already described, responsible to the Prime Minister, and the chairmen of the various corporations, responsible to the Minister of Corporations. This may be styled the minor line of executive officers. Both lines, it will be observed, are organized on a hierarchical system of responsibility, their interaction co-ordinated by the responsible Ministers, the Prefects and the Podestà; and all these officers, each occupying his special place of authority and responsibility, form with the rest of the members of the Cabinet, the executive, which is the ruling power in the country.

The executive, however, is neither, nor

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pretends to be, omnipotent. Its power is checked by various constitutional means. First, there is the judiciary, an entirely independent body, as in Britain, who apply the law. The executive is as much subordinate to the laws of the land as the humblest citizen. The executive in other words possesses no arbitrary powers. Secondly, there is the legislature, which helps to make the laws and the approval of which is required for any new law. It is composed as in Britain of two chambers ; the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies (for local government purposes, provincial and communal—there are likewise small assemblies corresponding in constitution to the Chamber of Deputies). These chambers are not the mandatories of a sovereign people, though they represent the people in different ways. They share, of course, some of the sovereignty (though in a minor degree than the executive) by virtue of their legislative powers—and through them, the people at large may be said to share in a still minor degree, in the

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sovereignty. But they do not pretend to constitute the main, real, sovereign power as they do under a democratic constitution.

The Senate is a body of life-members nominated by the King on the proposal of the Prime Minister. Princes of the blood royal sit in it by right. For the rest it is composed of persons over forty years of age who have conspicuously served the State in their various professions—members of the armed forces, the civil service, the judiciary, the executive, the professions : eminent politicians, business men, labour leaders, professors, artists, writers, etc., etc. It is accordingly a highly representative body of national achievement.

The Chamber of Deputies is composed, on the other hand, of the representatives of the various categories of givers and takers of labour, of the professional classes (i.e. of the thirteen great national confederations of labour, capital and professional men, outlined in the previous chapter)

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and of the more important cultural and welfare-work associations in the land. It represents, in other words, the various productive interests (possibly conflicting interests) within the nation. Each member is definitely known to represent a particular interest, and his business is to plead that interest; but naturally—in a clearly defined body such as this is—he will plead it in vain, unless he can show reason that the interests he wishes to promote are capable of being squared with the national interests.

The members of neither chamber originate as party men. The first are appointed as a reward of public service, and the lives of the majority have been lived altogether outside active politics. The members of the second, representing as they do organized interests, are not so much political choices as professional choices. The bodies they represent, being united for the particular purposes for which they were constituted, naturally send up those men to represent them who, they calculate, are



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most capable of doing so. If a joint-stock company, for example, were asked to appoint a representative to a general trade conference, the Board of Directors may be relied upon to choose the man deemed most capable of representing the company's case. The shareholders are not concerned whether his politics are black, white or red. They are satisfied if he is a capable business man, loyal to the interests of his company and possesses the talents needed to voice those interests effectively. So the members of the Italian Chamber of Deputies occupy a very similar situation. And the manner in which they are elected is also very similar, with only one important difference. They are not, for instance, elected directly by the general body of those whom they represent, but by the central Board of the body they represent. The important difference lies in this : the Board selects three alternative candidates (very much as a diocesan council, on the death of, bishop, sends up three names to the archbishop out of which the archbishop

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—if he has no reason to reject all three as unsuitable—selects the new bishop). Thus the three names go up for examination to the Grand Fascist Council, which thereupon makes the selection (i.e. the Grand Fascist Council has a function here corresponding to that of an archbishop). In this way the fascist principle of hierarchical government is maintained, and the man considered as most valuable from the national as distinct from the local point of view, is preferred.

The whole list of selected members is then submitted to a general plebiscite of the whole electorate—*yes* or *no*. The purpose of this plebiscite is to demonstrate that there exists a sufficient degree of consent in favour of the list to justify its representing organized opinion in the face of any severe criticism. Under such a system, the government is practically bound to obtain the required majority in favour of the list of candidates submitted, unless its work was proving on all sides outrageously incompetent. Very similarly

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the annual general meeting of a joint-stock company almost invariably passes the accounts and report, and confirms the Board in office, unless there happens to be an evident and *prima facie* case for enquiring into the manner in which the company's business is being conducted.

Should, on the other hand, the electorate turn the list down, then a regular election with alternative lists is provided—on a system of proportional representation. This alternative result, however, should not be regarded as homage to the idea of popular sovereignty. It should be regarded as merely a piece of useful constitutional machinery, thought out with a view to giving the constitution a certain elasticity and to providing a safety valve for any really dangerous popular feeling.

No new laws can be promulgated without the consent of both chambers. But the executive proposes the bills. The chambers discuss them, propose amendments, get their amendments passed if they can, criticize them. Their functions,

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beyond this, are to criticize, pass or reject the various ministerial and national budgets ; to voice sectional grievances ; and to provide a ladder for political talent. With that their functions end. They have not the right to overthrow a ministry, although, of course, should, through a process of continual obstruction, a deadlock arise, tending to paralyse the executive, the King would have no other alternative but to consider a change in his Prime Minister. But the King, as sole representative of the nation, taken as a whole, alone has to decide to the best of his ability any such questions arising.

Finally, all laws involving a constitutional change, have to obtain the consent not only of the legislative chambers, but of the Grand Fascist Council. The chief ministers belong *ex-officio* to this council and all ministers have the right to speak in both chambers.

Now, no human contrivance is perfect and no Italian fascist claims that this constitution is perfect. It would be quite easy

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to make out a theoretical case in which a deadlock might arise out of this constitution, which would be incapable of solution except by some kind of *coup d'état* or revolution. Likewise, it would be quite easy to argue that it might degenerate into a tyranny, were the King in collusion with an ambitious Prime Minister, an imbecile or utterly blind to the public interests. The same kind of thing might be said of every constitution. What Italian fascists claim in favour of this particular constitution is that it is a fair reflection of general fascist principles, provides a good balance of powers, is neither too rigid nor too flexible and is suited to the present needs and to the mentality of the Italian people. They claim, moreover, that it is democratic in the sense that it does not represent a closed caste system of government, that it enables grievances to be voiced, enables all kinds of influences to be brought to bear on the executive, provides means of constructive criticism, a safety valve for strong popular feeling,

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and a ladder for political talent wherever it may originate. It is anti-democratic in the sense that it endeavours progressively to ensure government by an aristocracy of talent and to protect the executive from gusts of popular sentiment. The passing unpopularity of a given measure, which nevertheless may be very much in the nation's interests, may be discounted. The power of organized sectional public opinion may likewise be to a considerable extent discounted. It provides a strong and vigorous executive; while the whole structure of the constitution may be said to be no less than the whole nation organized and integrated. Thus it prevents local constitutional bodies and sectional interests pulling effectively different ways, to the detriment of the interests of the whole nation. Nor is the government—the executive—a *deus ex machina*, called into being by the periodical convulsion of an election and then left as something superimposed above the life of the nation, but is part of an all-embracing

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mechanism, from which no citizen is ever wholly absent, which is in perpetual motion. It is indeed the nation completely organized, completely integrated—the concrete realization of that unity in variety which is the essence of a true organism, a more perfect realization than has hitherto been found of the ideal of a commonwealth. This, in any case, is what it purports to be. Under such a constitution, the nation may be compared to a pyramid, broadly based, but culminating in a point of authority—braced by a strong executive, but containing within the edifice so braced every variety of compartment suitable to individual tastes, provided those tastes do not run counter to the safety and stability of the whole edifice.

It is not claimed, however, that the edifice is not subject to further improvement. On the contrary it is claimed that as time goes on, its sufficient flexibility, combined with the system of a strong executive, will enable it to be improved in

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the light of experience and to be adapted to slowly changing circumstances. All systems of government fail if a nation is decadent, most succeed if the nation is growing in vigour. But if a nation is growing in vigour and possesses at the same time a well-devised constitution, its well-being will have the greatest chance of being rapidly promoted. There will then be no back-sliding, no waste, no partial paralysis of the forces working for good. All constitutions, according to fascism, are no more than devices to ensure the maximum well-being of a nation. In the midst of all constitutional machinery there is discernible within certain shifting limits, the centre of gravity of sovereignty—ultimate human authority. Provided that authority be exercised better in the interests of the nation, taken as a whole, than any alternative authority, it possesses a divine right to rule. That, it is claimed, is the only point worth taking into account in the question as to where sovereignty ought to reside. And that is really the



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beginning and the end of the whole fascist case, when it comes to the building of a constitution; and the word "ought" implies a moral problem. So we are thrown back again on the main fascist contention, the acceptance of which depends on the recognition of an objective moral law. Dispute this and the whole fascist case goes by the board. Accept it, and it becomes difficult to remain unconverted to the rest; for the rest is little more than the application of this fundamental principle to contingent circumstances, entailing questions involving, indeed, the practical judgment as to the exact measures which should be adopted—the how much of this and the how little of that (and hence the need of authoritative government—strong, disinterested and *competent*)—but referring back always to one absolute and immutable law, which every reasonable man is capable of apprehending.

With that we can leave fascism to the reader's critical consideration. The case

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is stated ; and there only remains a little to be said by way of cautioning the reader against certain very ready pitfalls. For the unwary—for those who have not had the time or the opportunity of studying the actual historical conditions in which fascism has arisen in Italy—it is important that these pitfalls should be pointed out. Otherwise he will have good reason to blame me if he comes later to revise his opinions, formed in the first instance in ignorance of them.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PITFALLS AND PARADOXES

THOSE who boggle at the idea of an objectively discernible moral law, will find it easier to approach the issues involved dispassionately, if they remember to distinguish between the moral law in the absolute sense and the moral law as applied to contingent circumstances. It is the former (apart from revelation) which fascists, in agreement with the teaching Churches, affirm to be evident to all reasonable and healthy-minded persons. The latter, on the other hand, they admit may be subject to differences of opinion in proportion to the complexity of the circumstances; but here too, they would assert, the differences of opinion that may arise need not be considered so formidable as they are often alleged to be, provided

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people are educated to use their practical æsthetic sense, to grasp situations whole by intuition, to avoid undue analysis and introspection, to fall back on simple general principles of action when in doubt, and to recognize that since there are varying degrees of capacity to determine what is right and wrong in a given set of circumstances, reverence for authority, in the particular sphere in which any question arises—scientific, political or religious, etc.—is an admirable state of mind, which should be earnestly cultivated. The fascist, indeed, is in a state of hearty revolt against the self-appointed amateur pontiff, who is so much in evidence nowadays in this era of so-called “independence of thought”—a phrase which fascism regards as either meaningless or merely synonymous with a robust temperament. But when it comes to the natural moral law in the absolute sense, he insists that it is as clear to reasonable and healthy-minded persons as are the colours of the spectrum to those not born colour-blind. The vir-

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tues, for example, have only to be pointed out in order to be recognized as such—fortitude, courage, self-discipline, sincerity, honesty, purity of heart, love and hope and faith (which, by the way, is a virtue and not, as the modern man is apt to regard it, “the ability to believe in something which one knows to be untrue”). As for the general principles of conduct, such as those laid down in the Decalogue or as, for example, the fascist political maxim that nobody is entitled to do what he wills if such action is against the general interests, these two represent clear, self-evident landmarks of moral truth, which the science of casuistry is able to refine in relation to a particular set of circumstances and so supplement with a number of smaller landmarks. The distinction, however, between what is contingent and what is absolute is a key distinction, which must always be made in approaching a fundamental question of this kind in general and any moral problem in particular, or grave risk is run of

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confusing the issue. And since the understanding of fascism involves a fundamental question of this kind, it is essential that the non-specialized reader be reminded of the distinction.

The whole question of liberty is really a question in point; for fascism distinguishes immediately liberty, in the absolute sense, defined as the right to do anything which is not wrong, as distinguished from licence, which is the right to do anything, good or bad, and liberty regarded as what may expediently be permitted or forbidden in a given set of circumstances. Liberty in the absolute sense is accordingly always the reverse side of the medal on which is inscribed the moral law, while liberty in the contingent sense is the degree of liberty permitted by the law of the land (itself based on the moral law) in relation to particular circumstances, a degree which must vary according to the needs of the situation.

Many people attack fascism in Italy on account of the limits which have been

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imposed by Mussolini's government on the freedom of the individual. The only question involved here, however, as far as fascism as a theory of government is concerned, is the question whether liberty is or is not distinguishable from licence in accordance with the above definitions. If it is, then the fascist point is conceded. The question on the other hand whether, in the given circumstances of Italian life to-day, Mussolini's government has or has not overstepped the limits of what should prudently be left for individuals to decide in the public interest, is not a question involving the theory of fascism, but one of a purely practical nature involving the wisdom of Italian statesmen. To judge the merits of this case with any degree of justice, it is necessary to have a full inside knowledge both of the Italian character and of the actual situation in Italy in all its actions and interactions. And nobody is fitted to do this, with perhaps rare exceptions, save an Italian living in Italy, possessed at the same time

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of the education and opportunity required for weighing all the complex circumstances. All that the outside student need keep in mind is the above distinction itself, the fact that he is an outsider and therefore in an unfavourable position to judge the merits of the question, and the fact that Italy is still in the throes of a revolution, which, as in time of war, requires many more restrictions on personal liberty than would be required in normal times.

To take a concrete example. In Italy the laws governing the liberty of the press are embodied now, for the most part, in the penal code. Infringement of the law leaves the culprit open to prosecution and, if he is proved guilty, to the prescribed penalties. The laws in themselves may not, of course, receive, like all human-made laws, universal approval, in that they involve contingent circumstances of a general nature ; but, if they are carefully examined, it will be found that they are not particularly controversial. They cover very much the customary ground.



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It is forbidden, for instance, to incite soldiers to insubordination, to incite one class against another, to give vent to blasphemous and obscene language, to indulge in pornography, libel and violent abuse of the principle of authority and of the symbols of authority, etc., etc. In any case, the subject-matter is very carefully defined; and I think it can be said without fear of contradiction that very few persons, whatever their persuasion, would find much in them to object to. But at the same time it is strongly felt that under modern conditions the press, which is immensely powerful, must be brought under a certain discretional control; and accordingly, side by side with the provisions regarding the press as embodied in the penal code, there is a special law of public safety which empowers the executive, through the Prefects of the provinces, to confiscate the whole issue of a newspaper should he consider in his discretion that the publication of a particular article is liable to lead to a

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breach of the public peace or to cause embarrassment to the government in its efforts to keep on friendly terms with foreign powers. These discretionary powers afforded to the Prefects entail a certain number of arbitrary decisions; and in the revolutionary circumstances of the actual moment, no doubt these powers are exercised with a degree of rigour which in normal times—even under a fascist government—would be very greatly relaxed. Meantime, given the circumstances, the press—though by no means muzzled—is rendered in many cases irritatingly timid. This is recognized by fascists themselves as unfortunate, but unavoidable in the actual circumstances; for the circumstances of a revolution are such that there is a constant danger of enflamed opinion breaking forth into violent action. It is a question of Hobson's choice between ugly incidents of violence and a degree of repression. The question of principle is hardly involved at all. It is a question of practical statesmanship.

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Passing from the consideration of liberty to the consideration of toleration, the same fundamental question is involved. The fascist temperament is intransigent—and claims that everybody should be so—when it comes to matters involving right and wrong in the absolute sense. It is tolerant—or claims to be—of the individual falling below the absolute ideal in the struggle of life and buffeted by circumstances. Toleration, fascists declare, is often a word which merely camouflages indifference. They insist that mankind must not be indifferent, that life is finest where conviction is strongest, where men and women are ready to die and suffer for their ideas. Applied toleration is a question of law and liberty—a matter for statesmanship. As a virtue it is a blend of magnanimity and of a capacity for experience and understanding. But that toleration which is born of indifference or of physical hypersensitiveness is no real toleration at all. True toleration is a virtue; and it is a virtue which can run

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quite well in harness with intransigence. Like idealism and a sense of reality they complement each other.

The discussion of these points not only illustrates the fascist *Weltanschauung*, but should bring home to the reader the necessity of distinguishing fascism in its essentials from any particular form of fascism as applied to given circumstances by a particular people. The Italian temperament is very different from the Anglo-Saxon's. Mind and emotion in Italy are less interwoven. The Italian mind is the harder or colder one; but his emotions are more passionate, cruder perhaps, certainly less sentimental. The Italian loves colour and drama and rhetoric, and abhors formality as distinct from artistic form. He is more spontaneous and perhaps less refined. For this reason—that is, the reason arising out of differences of national character—Anglo-Saxons and other foreigners must be careful not to confuse fascism with all that there is of the Italian character mixed up with fascism in Italy.

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Much of the very exuberance of fascism in Italy is merely Italian exuberance, much of Mussolini's rhetoric untranslatable Italian word-picture making. Much is distorted by the reflection of the historical phase through which Italy is marching. Italians, for example, are an old race, deeply experienced in life, with an unrivalled history of achievement, a race intensely proud of their glorious past and intensely ashamed of having become, during their period of decadence and disunity, a prey to foreign invaders, subservient, finished, soft and poverty-stricken—a race chiefly renowned abroad as one of ice-cream vendors and strummers on the mandoline. And now that they exhibit a newly-found vigour, which they feel and know is second to nobody's, now that they have accomplished their political unity and found at last a common consciousness of nationality, and know that they have it in them to become great again, it is not surprising that they give expression to their feelings and convictions in a manner

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which is somewhat irritating to the nerves of people of older national organizations, nervous in the face of inevitable dangers to the *status quo*, suspicious of upstarts. Italy, to-day, is like Elizabethan England, a young, comparatively weak nation which has suddenly realized the importance of the qualities it stands for and the potential strength which it is capable of developing. It is in a mood to singe the King of Spain's beard. But unlike Elizabethan England, Italy, owing to her glorious past, suffers in her first steps towards her glorious future from the effects of an inverted inferiority complex. This often makes her exhibitions of self-assertion particularly irritating. Once explained, however, they may be understood and more easily forgiven. But all this has nothing whatsoever to do with fascism, except that the advent of fascism has coincided (inevitably perhaps, however distinct the two things may be) with the growth of Italian nationalism, which has given fascism its peculiar flavour in Italy

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to-day and has received from fascism an idea which, because of its universality, is fitted to become a matter of national pride. It has added fuel to the nationalist flames.

Fascism itself is more universal than nationalist. It is nationalist only in the sense that it believes in patriotism as a force for good, and insists on the merging of individual interests in the general interests and therefore in the integration of the individual in the State, which implies the national bond. It repudiates, too, the idea of a universal State which might come through the loosening of the bonds of authority, and the breaking down of national distinctions. On the contrary, it believes that the only right way of moving away from our present conditions of international chaos towards higher international unity, is by building upon the foundation of self-respecting, strong and highly organized national entities. Otherwise, it is claimed, the gain of unity would mean a much more serious loss, namely, loss of vitality and loss of local character. Thus

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the State itself must be based on the family, on trade and vocational corporations, on differentiated regional elements, brought together into a higher unity but not at the expense of the personality of each part and not therefore through the pulverizing process of universal individual suffrage. In other words, the process of growth from smaller to larger political entities must be one "akin to a honeycomb and not to a soup" (to quote from a contemporary Italian periodical)—an aggregation of larger and smaller cells within cells—a natural growth which the practical statesman will abet as each successive stage approaches, but for which it would be unwise to force the pace.

Fascism and nationalism, issuing in any form of dangerous or chauvinistic temper, must consequently be sharply distinguished. In Italy they are still inextricably mixed. But nationalism in Italy represents really a movement anterior in time to fascism. It is a phenomenon which may be regarded as one of fascism's



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precursors. It has provided fascism with some of its most able men ; and these men, though evolving with the times, have inevitably brought into fascism some of the temperament of their purely nationalist upbringing. The later and the earlier movements have acted on each other reciprocally, but the later—fascism—is richer in ancestry ; and this very richness in ancestry is leading to its gradual shedding of those particular influences of each of its ancestors which are incompatible with one another. Thus fascism is slowly discarding nationalist chauvinism ; it is emerging as something quite distinct. In its purity it is already visible to the acute observer. He can see what the process is bringing forth ; but to anyone with a superficial knowledge of Italy or lacking in a sense of history, it is easy to be blind to its significance.

Italian nationalism, like its counterpart in the *Action Française* movement in France, had a bias in favour of grand old pagan traditions, loving the Roman Church

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not so much as the spouse of Christ, but as the heir to the Roman Empire. It respected the Church *qua* Church as embodying the principle of authority and order, but was afraid of its humanizing charity. It was, moreover, penetrated with modernism, just like the *Action Française*. But the difference in this respect is interesting. Whereas in France to a great extent, and so in England and in America, modernism is rampant in the form of a movement among persons who have lost faith in the literal meaning of their Church's dogmas and are attempting to square their loss of faith with their sentimental attachments to the tradition in which they were brought up, in Italy the equally rampant modernism was and is a movement of men who have become sick of their positivism and agnosticism, and are attempting to embrace the Church's dogmas in a form acceptable to a weak digestion. In other words, modernism is a meeting-place of two movements working in diametrically opposite directions, the one away, the

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other towards orthodoxy. For this reason, fascism in Italy being an advance in movement upon its precursor nationalism, is also in process of shedding modernism and becoming orthodox.

The process, of course, is not complete. But it is extremely symptomatic, for it reveals fascism as the fruit of a type of mentality which finds rest within the orbit of a teaching Church. It is not necessary to say more than that; but that much is positively evident. As far as our present argument is concerned, it should be observed that a large number of Italians, brought up in the positivist atmosphere of the generation before the war, are moving through modernism into the Church of their fathers. What is impeding their progress is already not so much the difficulty of swallowing the literal meaning of the catholic Church's dogmas, but a spirit of insubordination to the Church's discipline. They claim that under modern conditions much of what the Church exacts of its members in the form of discipline

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and observance, and many of its more elaborate rites, are too exacting or take up too much time. It is this they would see modernized, rather than the dogmas. And they wish to see the Church less afraid of modern culture and manners. The siege by the forces of disbelief of the Church's citadel they proclaim as raised and would like to see the clergy attacking rather than defending, and, for the purpose of attacking more effectively, discarding a lot of mediæval paraphernalia. They are like men who would gladly serve in the army, if there were less parades, if comfortable clothing were substituted for stiff, hot uniforms, and if the generality of officers were only more intellectually inspiring.

The above represents the practical side of this absorbingly interesting phenomenon. In the realm of strict philosophy, parallel with the nationalist movement, there arose the new idealism of Spaventa, Croce and Gentile. This likewise may be regarded as the road of escape for many thinking Italians from rationalism and

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scepticism. Progressively during the past twenty or thirty years the new idealism has purged itself of that part of its Hegelian content which is certainly incompatible with orthodox Christianity. But here too the process is incomplete; and although Gentile, who stands still for the doctrine of immanentism as contrasted with transcendentalism, is already, as a theorist, a back number in Italy, there is a large body of philosophic opinion which burks at the philosophic methods favoured by the catholic Church, namely, scholasticism. They would like to see neo-scholasticism give way to a method less formally syllogistic and entirely make its own the modern mathematical school. They accuse the Church of clinging to a method too much akin to that advocated by many rationalists, who they doubt can be defeated—but only pinned to their positions—by present-day theologians trained in the catholic Church's own seminaries and universities. They assert that on this field the battle can

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end only in a draw amid arid abstractions. They would like to see St. Augustine the patron saint of modern philosophy rather than St. Thomas, in the belief that the methods the former pursued are, in the phase through which the world is passing to-day, on the whole more capable of assimilating modern philosophical methods than the scholastic method. And this fact—prescinding from the logic of the situation—is a physical hindrance to their complete reconciliation with catholic claims.

The nett result is that anybody who views Italy to-day is very prone to see no wood but the trees only. The situation is a maze of apparent paradoxes and pitfalls for the unwary. Numerous persons who call themselves fascist are only fascist in a negative sense. They agree with the rationalized formulas ; but their mentality belongs to a past generation. Nationalists, neo-idealists, modernists, red revolutionary syndicalists in upbringing before the war, they carry the mentality produced

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during the primitive period of their lives into their fascist life of to-day, their middle age. They are theoretical fascists only. All this is apt to distract the impartial observer ; and when to this type of fascist are added the numerous gang of persons who have joined the movement for interested motives only, and of others who have had no education to speak of, but find in the movement, without understanding it, the means of self-expression in action, confusion is apt to become still worse confounded.

This is indeed the fate of all movements. They must be appreciated dynamically. They grow out of a series of previous movements and these, before they are each assimilated into the new movement and before all are fused to form a new metal, so to speak, which stands out as something definitely differing from any other, they may be seen to be flowing on by themselves and overlapping one another. The new movement first operates instinctively and blindly. Thinkers strip their minds to

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explain the instinctive actions and, after a period of controversy, produce a more or less agreed theory to fit the facts. Then new men arise who fit their actions to the theories, but possessed of mentalities formed under a previous dispensation. Only the youth, who have known no other dispensation, who grow up in the movement after the theories have become fixed, belong to it naturally, their action and their thought completely at one.

So the course of a movement has often the appearance of a phenomenon of nature ; and unless a great man arises, a man of action, born before his natural time, capable of dominating the situation and of interpreting the movement as it will eventually emerge in its purity, the movement will move forward at the cost of many setbacks. But in Mussolini fascism has found its man, with the result that it is moving towards maturity with an astonishing rapidity. Without him, things would have gone too fast at certain periods and this would in turn have resulted in



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long periods of reaction and apparent stagnation. And no doubt far greater excesses would have been indulged in. There is little doubt indeed, were it not for Mussolini, that the fascist revolution, like most other revolutions, would have progressed in a trail of blood. He has succeeded in containing it within limits which have kept it astonishingly moderate, considering the circumstances of heated controversy. He has succeeded in canalizing it, and, by preventing the worst excesses, in withstanding the forces of reaction. This point should not be lost sight of in view of the indignation aroused in the hearts of many people by such excesses as have certainly occurred and by the curtailment of certain liberties, which in normal times would readily be conceded.

Those, to conclude, who would really learn what fascism stands for, must abstain from merely collecting opinions in a world in flux. Thousands of people in Italy are "agin the government," for one per-

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sonal reason or another—because their own selfish interests, which they may not even realize are selfish, are frustrated; because this and that is not permitted, the necessity of which is not appreciated, or on account of an actual error of judgment on the part of the government; because of envy or dislike (merited or otherwise) of fascist leaders; because of economic difficulties which ignorance attributes to be peculiar to Italy, etc., etc. Thousands too do not fully realize, for the reasons I have attempted to describe, exactly what it all means. All tend to interpret the movement from their particular angle and in accordance with the prejudices acquired during their youth. But, living in Italy, moving among the peasants, the artisans and professional classes, interpreting the spirit of the new laws in relation to the traditions of these classes, reading the mass of fascist literature, and especially the official literature and the text-books approved for the training of the new generation, fascism can be seen to emerge as

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something perfectly definite and, whether we like it or not, exceedingly pregnant with vitality. Its special interest lies in its attempt to find a new synthesis, which will resolve the apparent antinomies of modern life, whether of action or of thought; its blending of ancient and modern, of the values which enhance personality with those which act as a check on individualism by returning to the orthodox solution of the problem, practical and theoretical, in accordance with a dualistic conception of the universe, of unity and diversity. If the reader will help the writer by forgiving his blemishes of style (some due to the need of a concentrated account of things) and the many necessary omissions, which a book of this length must necessarily make; if he will realize that the principles enumerated are subordinate to the spirit of the movement which it has been attempted to portray; if, finally, he will lay aside his prejudices for the time being and look upon the movement as a phenomenon worthy of

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his unbiassed interest, I think the foregoing pages will bring him to realize the inner significance of fascism, whatever may be his finally considered judgment of its merits. And if he does that, the writer's purpose will be fulfilled.

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